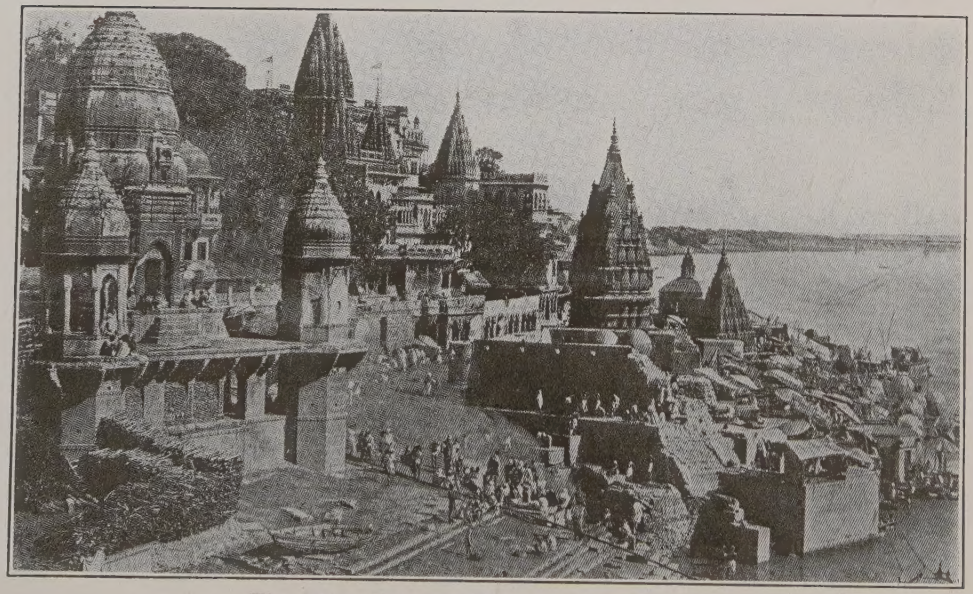
In a Fair Country

Harriette Bronson Gunn

IN A FAR COUNTRY

When there was once no heart to feel compassion,
Nor any human arm outstretched to save,
One came to earth, filled with divinest pity
And to redeem the lost, found here, his grave.

And when, Death's awful power forever broken,
He rose again, triumphant, to his throne,
One last command he left, that those who love him
Should bear his name to every distant zone.



The Most Famous Ghat in India—Benares

IN A FAR COUNTRY

A STORY OF CHRISTIAN HEROISM AND ACHIEVEMENT

By
Harriette Bronson Gunn

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THIS LITTLE VOLUME

IS REVERENTLY DEDICATED

To

THOSE WHO, OBEDIENT TO THE GREAT COMMISSION,
HAVE CARRIED THE GOSPEL TO THE UTTERMOST
PARTS OF THE EARTH, AND THERE HAVE
REARED THE STANDARD OF THE CROSS

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In a Far Country

CHAPTER ONE

THE OLD HOME AND THE NEW

RADIANT sunrise had dawned over the hills of Wolcott, Conn., and all nature rejoiced in the glory and freshness of the morning. In a little settlement in the valleys an unusual stir prevailed, and around a cluster of wagons drawn up before one of the houses a tearful group was gathered. As the last farewells were exchanged, the words "Good-bye, Osee!" "Good-bye, Rebecca!" were heard from one and another, and handkerchiefs fluttered as the horses started and the long journey began.

For Osee Bronson was leaving his ancestral home, and taking his wife and children to the then distant State of New York, hoping to better

their fortunes in that newer country. It had been a hard struggle to leave the old home, with its wealth of associations and tender memories. Several generations of Bronsons had been laid to rest in the old cemetery on the hillside, and children's children gazed with reverence upon the moss-covered tombstones, with their quaint inscriptions giving the names of those who long ago had finished their course and entered this dreamless sleep. It was painful to sever such ties and go away to dwell among strangers. So, sorrowfully they parted from their kindred, yet with hope.

At last the travelers arrived at the village of Norway, N. Y., where Osee Bronson purchased a farm and settled for the remainder of his life. Here was born Miles, their youngest son, and the darling of his mother. He early showed a fondness for books and study, and was so desirous of an education that his father permitted him to leave the farm and live with his eldest brother in town so that he could attend school.

When old enough he began to teach in the country, and thus tried to earn money. Sometimes he would board himself, and often ate only potatoes and salt in order to save the means with which to buy the books he needed. At last came the happy day when the ambition of his life was attained

Rev. Miles Bronson, D. D.

and he entered college. While working his way through Madison University (now Colgate) he was converted, and felt in his heart a call to the ministry. While pursuing his studies in the theological seminary, there came a call to a still higher service—to become a foreign missionary.

"The voice of his departed Lord, 'Go, teach all nations,'
Came on the night air, and awoke his ear."

Gladly he responded, "Here am I, Lord; send me." But to the fond mother this was a heavy trial. To her, her youngest born had been so dear, how could she relinquish him for a life of such sacrifice and danger? For days she mourned and wept over the separation that must ensue, and her son sat often beside her reading passages of Scripture to enable them to see more plainly her duty and his. Together they prayed, till at last she was enabled to lay him upon the altar and nerve herself for the grief of parting. Ah! fond mother, hadst thou foreseen the sublime results of this thy sacrifice, thou wouldest not have wished to withhold him, no matter at what cost to thy loving heart. For in the numbers won from heathenism through the labors of thy beloved son thou hast thy rich reward, and as

again ye walk together on those heavenly hills what joy must fill thy heart to see among that great multitude, which no man can number, redeemed out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, those who through his instrumentality have found the way, and are arrayed in the white robes of heaven.

CHAPTER TWO

A FATHER'S SACRIFICE

N the pleasant village of Madison, N. Y., was the home of Ruth Lucas, eldest daughter of John Lucas, the storekeeper of the little town. She had grown into a womanhood of rare promise, and was the idol of her parents. She had dreamed of some brilliant career to open before her, little thinking of a call that was coming, to a Christly service and sacrifice, that would make her one of earth's true heroines.

One bright Sabbath morning in summer a stranger preached in the village church—a student from the theological seminary in the adjacent town of Hamilton. As he had to hasten to an afternoon appointment, he could not accept an invitation to dinner, but Ruth Lucas approached him and offered some of the contents of her lunch basket. Pleased with her thoughtfulness, the young man accepted the courtesy and partook of a hasty luncheon. This was the first

meeting between Miles Bronson and the future partner of his lifework on foreign shores. He afterward laughingly said that those cookies were delicious, offered by the fair hands of Ruth Lucas.

The acquaintance thus begun ripened into affection and ended in an offer of marriage. Her heart responded to his plea; but, alas! she found her father bitterly opposed, for to him it seemed wrong and unwise to permit his idolized daughter to go to a far-off land to be surrounded by such hardships and dangers. So he replied to the young suitor, "Never, Mr. Bronson; never! I would rather bury my Ruth than permit her to go with you as a foreign missionary." So the lovers were compelled to wait until the objections of the fond father could be overruled, and meantime a severe illness came upon Ruth Lucas and her life was despaired of. In anguish the father knelt and implored God's forgiveness for having withheld his cherished daughter from the work to which she had been called, and promised if her life were spared to surrender his darling one to the foreign missionary service. When strength returned to the sufferer, and her father tearfully granted his consent, a quiet wedding took place in the old homestead at Madison, and these two young hearts were united and pledged them-

Mrs. Ruth Lucas Bronson

selves to the work beyond the seas. And to this they remained faithful to the end and never regretted the cost. The love they bore each other and the Master illuminated the path before them, and cast a radiance even over the sacrifices and hardships that were inevitable.

A few weeks passed and they were to leave the home land for distant India. In the little church in Whitesboro, N. Y., of which Miles Bronson was a member, a farewell service was held for the two young missionaries. He had been one of the choir, and was known and loved by all present. The pastor gave out the hymn:

"Yes, my native land, I love thee,
All thy scenes I love them well;
Friends, connections, happy country,
Can I bid you all farewell;
Can I leave you
Far in heathen lands to dwell?"

Voice after voice broke down and ceased while tears flowed freely, until at last Miles Bronson's voice was the only one audible, and he continued to sing till the hymn was finished amid the sobs of the audience. The melody swelled to tones almost triumphant as he sang:

"On the mountains let me labor,
In the desert let me tell
How He dies, the blessed Saviour,
To redeem a world from hell.
Glad I leave thee,
Native land, farewell, farewell."

Those present could never forget that scene. Was it not prophetic of a time in the coming years when, with joy, he reared the standard of the cross on the hills where dwelt a fierce heathen tribe; and in those mountain fastnesses planted churches which still hold aloft the light amid the darkness of heathenism?

But in the old home at Madison a still more touching farewell scene occurred. It was early morning, and the family had just arisen from the breakfast table. Sorrow filled every heart, for the shadow of approaching separation fell heavily over all.

"There comes the carriage!" exclaimed the only brother of the young bride, looking out of the window—the conveyance that was to take far hence the idol of their hearts. "Good-bye, mother!" and arms were entwined in a last embrace, and farewell kisses showered amid tears that fell like rain. "Good-bye!" "Good-bye, brothers and sisters beloved!" "Good-bye, fa-

ther!" but here came a silence more eloquent than words, as father and daughter stood locked in an embrace that it seemed impossible to sever. At last the father cried, "Ruth, my child, my darling, how can I give you up? O God, help me bear this sorrow!" The anguish of that moment no language can describe, till finally the young husband gently disengaged those clinging arms and carried his wife, half fainting, to the waiting carriage. I fancy that through the agony of that parting might have been heard whispered by unseen lips the comforting promise uttered on Palestinian hills so many centuries before, "There is no man that hath left houses, and lands, and parents, and children for my sake and the gospel's but shall receive a hundredfold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

Thirty years later, after a life of noble service abroad, these same words were inscribed upon the simple slab that marks the last resting-place of Ruth Bronson, touching with their pathos all who knew her life history. And she truly gave up all for Christ; for a still sharper anguish followed when she not only had given up her beloved parents, but must also put aside the clinging arms of little children that she might continue the work to which she was pledged and not de-

prive her little ones of their birthright—to be educated in a Christian land. With streaming tears she exclaimed, "Jesus, I do this for thee, and I know that 'no man having put his hand to the plow and looking back' is fit for the kingdom of God!" Ah, tender mother, One did walk beside thee verifying his promise, and giving thee strength to bear the separation so grievous to thy loving heart, and in the stars won from heathenism for his crown of rejoicing will be found thy reward.

CHAPTER THREE

OUTWARD BOUND

SOON after the heart-breaking farewell between Ruth Lucas and her kindred, the young bride and her husband were set apart for foreign mission service, and together with Rev. Jacob Thomas and wife were designated to Assam, Northeastern India. They embarked on the ship Rosabella, a sailing vessel bound for Calcutta, and a long, weary journey lay before them. There were then no facilities for travel to shorten the distance between America and this far land of the Orient. There was a brief farewell service at the wharf, and with a fervent "Godspeed" to the departing missionaries, the ship weighed anchor and soon their dear home shore had receded from view. Naught could be seen but the tossing ocean billows, and yet amid the sadness of this exile from the home land a gladness filled their hearts that they were fulfilling the last command of their divine Master, who had said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me."

It was long months before they arrived in Calcutta, stopping on their way at Sumatra. The missionary party went on shore, glad again to step on solid land and see the beauties of nature in this tropical island; but Ruth Bronson becoming separated from her companions was lost for a while in a dense jungle. She knew not which way to turn and called loudly for help, terrified by the thought of wild beasts that might be prowling near. Finally her cries were heard by the searching party that had been sent out for her, and she was rescued from her dangerous position. This was an adventure often described to her children and friends.

When the long journey on the sea was over, a means of conveyance had to be provided for the remainder of the voyage. Their destination was Sadiya, in the province of Assam. To reach this point the mighty Brahmaputra River must be ascended for over a thousand miles, and rude native boats were the only means of transportation available. As it was against the current these were often difficult to propel up stream; but, undaunted, the brave voyagers started on this final stage of their journey. It was well they were ignorant of the dire perils before them, and that one of their number was to meet with a sudden and tragic death. Ascending the Brah-

maputra at that season of the year was attended with a thousand obstacles; for when the winds were contrary, and the sails could not be used, the boat had to be pushed forward by rowing, or

An Ancient Temple of Assam

poling, or towing it along by men walking on the shore. Then again, the only way to proceed was to send ahead a small canoe with a rope, one end of which was attached to the boat and the other end fastened to a bush or tree on the bank,

and then the boat was pulled with a hand-over-hand movement, which was laborious and slow in the extreme. Still, amid all these drawbacks, the missionaries kept up heart until one day, when nearing the end of their difficult journey, Miles Bronson was seized with the fever of the country in a most malignant form. There was no doctor, no medicine, and Sadiya the mission station still a hundred miles away. To add to their dismay, the boatmen, discouraged and worn out by their efforts to propel the boat, came in a body and holding up their lacerated hands, bleeding from long pulling of the ropes and the poling, refused to go any further, and fastened up the boat to the shore. No persuasion or threats or pleading could move them. In this emergency, Mr. Thomas, Mr. Bronson's associate, in order to save the life of the sick and almost dying man, decided to take the canoe and several of the boatmen who agreed to remain, and push onward to the English station of Sadiya and obtain medical assistance. The sufferer was fast sinking; and bidding him and the rest of the party a brief farewell, Mr. Thomas embarked in the frail canoe.

The fierce current and the action of the water often undermined the soil beneath trees that grew along the shore, and they were hurled into

the stream with great force. As the young missionary passed under a large peepul tree, it and another tree suddenly fell across the canoe and sunk it by their weight. Mr. Thomas was engulfed with it, but the boatmen saved themselves, and swimming to the station, which was in sight, reported the sad occurrence. A party immediately started down the river, among whom were the English doctor and the missionary already living there. But, alas! when they reached the spot life was extinct. Mr. Thomas had been entangled in the branches of the trees and his head held beneath the water, and unable to extricate himself he had been speedily drowned. The body was loosened from the trees and borne tenderly back to the town, while others of the party went onward to seek the place where the boat with the sick man and the two ladies had been left. They searched for many hours, and almost despaired of finding them as there were so many bends in the river.

And now let us transport ourselves to the banks of the distant Brahmaputra, to the spot where the native boatmen had tied the boat. Alone, amid the deadly miasma of the jungle, their provisions failing, and surrounded by beasts of prey, their condition was indeed terrible. The

sick man lay in the small cabin below and beside him sat his despairing wife, and large tears coursed down her cheeks; for unless help came speedily there was no hope for his life.

"Maria," she calls to Mrs. Thomas, who is on deck with a glass in her hands, intently scanning the river, "do you see the canoe returning?"

"Alas, no," replies her companion. "There is nothing in sight, and God help us or we shall all perish. There is no food left for another meal, for I cooked the last this morning. I fear the wild animals that are prowling very near us at night and are kept away only by our light and fire. Yesterday I saw the eyes of a tiger gleaming from the jungle, and the crocodiles too are becoming very bold, and swim nearer and nearer to the boat. But surely relief will come soon." She went below to relieve the watcher, and Ruth Bronson came on deck, and falling on her knees begged God to spare the life of her dying husband and send help soon. And now she hears a call coming over the water, and her heart leaps for joy as she quickly answers and raises higher their signals of distress, so that they might be seen by the rescue party.

"Maria! Maria!" she calls. "Come quickly! Four canoes are coming around the bend and has-

tening toward us." Both women wept with joy as they saw handkerchiefs waving and the figures of Europeans approaching.

"But where is my husband?" exclaimed Mrs. Thomas as she sees they are strangers. She grows pale with fear as they come on board and grasp the hands of these brave women.

"Did not my husband feel able to return with you?" asks the poor young wife, trembling with anxiety. "He only could guide you hither, as he said it would be hard for any one else to find the boat."

"My sister," said the missionary who had come with the relief party, "how shall I tell you the sad tidings that he whom you love is no more? An accident befell him while on his way for assistance, and we have hastened on to your rescue."

But she heard no more, having mercifully swooned away at his first words, as the dreadful truth was made known to her that she was left alone, so far from her home and kindred. Pitying hands restored her to consciousness, but only to find her reason dethroned by the awful shock.

The sick man was placed on a mattress in one of the canoes, and sheltered from the blazing sun as much as possible, and the little party set out sorrowfully for the station of Sadiya, leaving the large boat with the baggage still moored to

the shore. Owing to the strong currents it took still four days to reach the town, during which time they suffered much discomfort in their cramped quarters and also from lack of food.

And so ended this long voyage, attended toward its close with so much of hardship, anxiety, and bereavement. Truly God's ways are mysterious and often past our understanding. The loss of this noble young missionary was a great blow to the little mission, and deep was the sympathy felt for his sorely stricken widow. Upon the stone sent out from America to mark his last resting-place are engraved the words, "Almost There." God accepted the work he fain would have done abroad, and perhaps called him to a higher service above.

CHAPTER FOUR

GOD'S MOUNTAIN LAND

SAD, weary year followed the arrival of Miles and Ruth Bronson at their distant field of labor. Gloom overshadowed that summer, caused by the sudden loss of their lamented associate, Jacob Thomas, and it took the sick man many weeks to recover. Ruth Bronson, overtaxed by the care of her husband during his long siege of fever, was herself prostrated, and several times lay dangerously ill, tenderly cared for by Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Cutter, the wives of the two pioneer missionaries. One day they placed in her arms a tiny babe, so frail and small that the parents rejoiced with trembling over the treasure God had given them in that dark heathen land. But this, their firstborn, lived to become a great joy and comfort in their home, and to perform a noble work in the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. The three families remained together at Sadiya until it was deemed best to establish a new station farther down the river, at Jaipur, to form a

basis of operations for work among the Nagas, a hill tribe of Assam. The Bronsons removed hither in March, 1838, leaving the Browns alone, as the Cutters had left on a trip to Calcutta.

The province of Assam lies between Burma and Tibet, surrounded by the foothills of the Himalayas, and separated from Tibet by a spur of these giant mountains, called the Assam Range. It is inhabited by different tribes, and among these the Nagas are a large and important one, fierce and warlike, and frequently coming down to the plains. Their most formidable weapon is a poisoned spear, which they use with deadly effect.

The most sublime scenery in the world is found in this wild mountain land. Although in the foothills, the peaks often rise to an elevation of ten thousand feet. The lofty summits of the parent mountains are far higher, and sometimes attain an altitude where no human foot has trod, and human life could not be maintained. Hence these majestic silences are undisturbed and undefiled by the presence and habitations of man. If, as has been said, "On every height there lies repose," then, indeed, it may be found on these giant summits, wrapped in their eternal snows, where lofty Mount Everest and her sister peaks pierce the sky. And these ermine-clad heights, encircling the valley of Assam and rising tier upon tier against the

blue of the heavens, is one of the grandest sights in India. Mid the foothills of these mighty sentinels of nature lived a people to whom the pioneer missionaries longed to give the gospel; that where Satan had had his stronghold the banner of the cross might be uplifted and that ancient superstition overthrown, this dark region might in truth become "God's Mountain Land."

The religion of these hill tribes was that of "spirit appeasers," very different from the Hindu faith that prevailed in the valley below. It consisted of a vague belief in some one omnipotent being who is well disposed toward men, and who, therefore, will do them no harm. But there are a number of evil spirits who are ill disposed toward human beings, and whose malevolent interference afflicts mankind. To them, therefore, sacrifices must be offered. These evil spirits are sylvan deities—spirits of the rocks, trees, and streams, and sometimes also of tribal ancestors. There is no regular priesthood, but some are supposed to be better endowed with the power of divination than others. When calamity occurs one or more of these diviners is called on to ascertain what particular demon is offended, and must be pacified with a sacrifice. This is done either by devil-dancing or by the examination of omens, such as eggs, the grains of rice, or the entrails of

God's Mountain Land

fowls. They believe in omens of all sorts. When goats and fowls and other animals are offered to the god, it is always assumed that the latter will be contented with the blood and entrails. The flesh is divided among the sacrificer and his friends, the leading soothsayer getting the lion's share.

Eighteen per cent. of the people of Assam are said to be spirit appeasers; but they become Hinduized, and are a challenge to Christianity. Mr. Bronson's interest in the Nagas had been especially awakened, and to begin a work among them he had removed with his wife and infant child to Jaipur. Soon after his settlement there he made an exploring tour into the Naga and Singpho territories, climbing the mountainside and seeking the remoter villages, taking with him a rubber tent and an interpreter. One day he reached a large village embowered in trees, where the aged chief received him hospitably and sent two of his sons to teach the white man their language. The day before he left nearly all the villagers visited him and begged him to read aloud the tracts he had prepared for them. So eager was this rude audience to hear the gospel message that it was midnight before they took their leave. Rumors of a revolt among other hill tribes having reached him, he returned to Jaipur

from the hills after a month's absence, feeling anxious about the safety of his little family.

War clouds were gathering in Burma and Nepaul, and an insurrection seemed imminent among the fiercer tribes. At length one of these, the Khamtis, aided by the Singphos, attacked Sadiya, where the Browns were located, and they escaped from the terrible massacre that followed only as by a miracle. One night, about three o'clock, Mr. and Mrs. Brown were suddenly awakened by savage yells and war cries. Springing to the window they found the sound came from the direction of the small fort, or stockade, where the English troops were garrisoned. Though taken by surprise, the roar of artillery followed; but, alas! soon the cantonments and the numerous buildings adjacent were in flames, and the sky grew red with the light of the burning settlement. The startled missionaries knew not what to do. But dressing quickly, and snatching up a few needed articles, they ran to the bank of the river and entered a small boat which was moored to the shore. The little party consisting of Mr. Brown and his wife, and two infant children and their nurse, or ayah, pushed out into the middle of the stream, where the boat was kept nearly opposite their house until the firing was over. Then rowing softly, lest the sound of

the oars might betray them, they drew near the stockade. All was silent there; both the warwhoop and the discharge of artillery had ceased, and the fugitives were uncertain as to who had gained the victory. Afraid to land, they fell in with a group of fishing-boats and remained among them until daylight. Their state of suspense was terrible until a faint glimmer of dawn shone in the eastern sky, and as the rosy hues grew brighter they watched anxiously for some sign from the stockade. Was it in possession of the savages or of its brave defenders? Alas, life or death hung upon the answer!

As the first rays of sunrise gilded the water, the sweet, clear, silvery notes of the English bugle sounded upon the stillness of early morning, like an echo of angel-music floating down from heaven, instead of the defiant scream of the savage. Thank God! they were saved, and they made their way to the protection of the fort as quickly as possible. There they found all the officers assembled except the commander, who had been killed while fleeing thither by poisoned spears. Several of the wives of the officers had fled to the fort barefooted and with only their nightclothes.

The Bronsons too were in great danger at Jaipur, as there was no English force at that station,

only forty Sepoys, or native soldiers, to protect the white residents. Although rumors were rife of a similar midnight attack upon Jaipur, and they were in hourly peril and fear, it never occurred, and the danger passed. The fierce hill tribes were subdued by the power of English arms, and these brave pioneer missionaries, in perils oft among the heathen, again resumed their work, praising God for their gracious deliverance from all harm and loss. Truly, "the angel of the Lord encampeth around them that fear him."

CHAPTER FIVE

AMONG THE NAGAS AND THE MOUNTAIN HEIGHTS

FTER peace had been restored among the disaffected tribes, Mr. Bronson removed with his family to one of the chief villages in the Naga Hills, to establish better the mission among that people. He brought with him primers and tracts translated into their language, and as soon as possible Mrs. Bronson opened a school for the sons of the chiefs and any who wished to be instructed. Her schoolroom was a rude hut, with holes cut in the sides of the walls for windows, and the pupils sat upon the floor, cross-legged. Curiosity prompted a good attendance, and sometimes the room would be full, and then again only a few would be present. She toiled on patiently, however, and at length an impress was made upon the minds of these wild but really bright and interesting youths. It was hard for her to preserve order, as whenever a chase went by after deer or other wild animals, without permission from their teacher, the dusky pupils would jump out of the windows to join the hunters. She was obliged to sit alone

patiently until their return, which would be sooner or later according to the results of the chase.

The villages in this region often made raids upon each other, so there was no security for the missionaries, but ever a little apprehension for their safety. The ayah, or native nurse, who had accompanied them from the plains, was thought trustworthy, and had been charged to take up the baby at the first sign of danger and run to the enclosure which had been prepared for defense, while they followed with whatever articles they could hastily gather up. She promised faithfully to take care of her infant charge and seemed all devotion. But when a time of danger came she was found wanting. The baby was forgotten, and in the confusion incident to an attack she was found collecting her personal property, and so afraid of losing any that she was running backward and forward, exclaiming, "My bustu! Oh, my bustu!" Bustu is a word that means property, and she had made up a large bundle out of her own things which she was preparing to convey to a place of safety. She was quickly dismissed and another nurse procured in her place.

In contrast to this unfaithful woman was the reply of the head chief of the village, who, when asked by Mr. Bronson if he could protect his

wife and child from harm, answered, "Have no fear, sahib, for I will place one of my swiftest runners in front of your hut, and tell him if any foe threatens, to wrap up the white woman and her babe in a strong piece of native cloth or sheet, and putting the bundle on his back run to the nearest jungle and hide there until the danger is over." This would probably have been done had the necessity arisen, and Mr. Bronson tried to feel reassured by this promise of protection for his loved ones.

They remained for some time among these strange, rude people, and the prospects grew bright of winning them for Christ. They listened attentively to the plan of salvation offered them in preference to their attempts to appease evil spirits, and if the Bronsons could have remained with them longer those mountains might have become aglow with the glory of the Sun of Righteousness arising over the darkness of centuries. Praise God that later the light did shine!

Among the traits of this people was a passionate fondness for music, and in the subsequent history of the Assam mission, when work was resumed among the hill tribes, a party of missionaries was seeking to gain entrance into a locality where white men had never yet penetrated. They were confronted by a bristling

A Naga Quiver (Ornamented with women's hair)

array of spears, each tipped by deadly poison, and pointed straight toward them. The aspect of these half-naked savages was indeed menacing, and would have struck terror into the stoutest heart. But instead of retreating before the leveled spears, one of the missionaries had a happy thought, and drawing his violin from its case, he began to play softly:

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly."

Astonished, the wild hill men heard the sweet melody floating over their rocky fastnesses, so different from the rude music to which they had been accustomed. They listened, entranced, until forgetful of their spears they slowly relaxed their hold, and at length let them rest upon the ground. The missionaries prayerfully waited for the spell of the music to perform its work upon these savage hearts, and finally the leader beckoned to them to advance, pointing to the lowered spears. With glad hearts over this seeming miracle, they entered the forbidden region and were hospitably treated by the very men who had opposed their entrance. And thus, through the power of Christian song and melody, the gospel obtained a lodgment in this hitherto inaccessible part of the mountains.

An amusing incident with monkeys occurred during the sojourn of the Bronsons in the hills. A native stole an infant monkey from its mother and carried it to the village. This atrocious act caused grief and consternation among the monkeys, and it was agreed that the entire community of them, as if each had received a personal injury, should march in line of battle to the settlement, and by dint of howling, screaming, and chattering, demand redress for the wrong. They soon arrived and astonished the people by their numbers and singular actions. They would rush forward and then retreat for a few paces and then rush forward again, as if to make a charge in true army style. And their chattering was truly deafening, and the clamor only increased as the monkeys advanced to the very roofs of the houses. It was not known what would be their next move, and great was the general perplexity. At last it was suggested that the baby monkey which had been made prisoner should be brought out and released. This was what they wanted, and a joyful chattering ran along the whole line as the little captive ran toward them in eager quest of its mother. The invaders now retreated in good order, carrying with them the rescued monkey, and chattering happily together as if over the success of their expedition.

CHAPTER SIX

A SHATTERED VASE

IN the family of Osee Bronson, who had removed from the old home in Wolcott, Conn., to New York State, was his only daughter, Rhoda, who had become a young woman of rare promise. She had been deeply affected by the call of her brother, Miles, to missionary service abroad, and was filled with a desire to follow him. Although not strong, physically, she determined to devote her life to this work, and prayed and waited for the way to open. She spent much time in the family of a minister whose members were very much attached to her, and to them she often spoke of this desire so very near her heart. It was a rare occurrence then for a single woman to cross the ocean, and her friends feared to have her undertake so perilous a journey and exposure to a new and trying climate. But they were unable to dissuade her, and hearing ever the call to this higher service she waited hopefully on, until at last her opportunity came. Rev. Cyrus Barker

and wife offered themselves for the foreign field; they were designated to reenforce the Assam mission, and were soon to sail for that distant land. Miss Bronson could now accompany them, and gladly prepared for her departure. Amid the sadness of the last farewells, her face shone with the joy her spirit felt in being now permitted to take up this work and also to go to her brother, for whom she had a most tender affection.

Setting sail from Boston, the missionary party had a pleasant voyage to Calcutta, and then ascended the Brahmaputra River in native boats, which journey usually took four months. On the way they met Mrs. Brown, of Jaipur, Assam, who was taking her sick child to Calcutta for medical treatment. Delighted to meet each other, the two boats were fastened to the shore and the travelers spent a day and a night together in a most enjoyable intercourse. This visit, by the way, greatly cheered Mrs. Brown, who had become wearied and discouraged by anxiety and hardships. When the young missionary arrived at Jaipur she found her dear brother, who had come down from the hills to meet and welcome her.

After a short rest they started for the Naga Hills, where Ruth Bronson waited to welcome this loved one from their native land, who had

much to tell her of home and friends and the kindred from whom she was separated. The newcomer was an object of great curiosity to the hill people, and they came flocking in from all quarters to see her, and when told of the long distance she had come to teach them, they exclaimed: "Can it be that the lady came all that way over the great waters? If she did it in safety, might not we too go and visit the God-looking race and their wondrous country?" This simple people often expressed a desire to visit America.

Miss Bronson at once began to learn the language and assist in whatever way was possible. But, alas! this delicate woman found herself unable to cope with the environment surrounding her. The food did not agree with her, as it was so different from that to which she had been accustomed. Bread was unobtainable, as there was no flour in the country, and their usual food did not seem to contain sufficient nourishment for the one whom they had welcomed so gladly. With deep anxiety her brother and his wife watched her grow pale and drooping, and did their utmost to provide more suitable food. They sent down to the plains to procure something she might relish, but in vain. The invigorating mountain air they hoped would help restore her strength, but saw that her vitality

was failing fast. Fever seized her and she wasted away; but while their hearts ached over her sufferings she was calm and peaceful, and never regretted that she had come. She said: "If I cannot get well, tell my dear ones that I am not sorry I came to this far land and have given my life, a sacrifice, on the altar of missions. I obeyed the call to come hither, and I leave the rest to God."

And thus, after only seven months on the field, this heroic girl passed away, to enter the joy and service above. With tears they prepared the frail, worn body for its rest, and journeyed sorrowfully down the mountains to Jaipur, where all that was mortal of Rhoda Bronson was laid tenderly away in the little English cemetery; where, later, the remains of Rev. Jacob Thomas were also brought from Sadiya and placed beside her. Two neat stones, sent from America, marked their resting-places. These two, although thus early crowned, instead of rendering the service they would fain have performed for the Master, none the less received the plaudit, "Well done!"

If it may seem a pity to any that this young life should have been sacrificed, and the question be asked, "To what purpose was this waste?" let us answer, that though the vase was

so early shattered, its fragrance did not perish, but breathed a perfume down through the years. For when missionary effort was renewed among the Nagas, a remote village was found whose inhabitants no longer worshiped evil spirits, but had heard of Jesus Christ and the way of salvation, and by acceptance of the scanty knowledge obtained believed. When asked how this had occurred, the head man of the place replied:

"Long ago a young white woman came over the sea and met my father and some men he had brought with him from our village, a long distance up the mountains. She told my father about the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to earth and died on a cross that our sins might be forgiven, and that we ought to believe in him instead of the mountain spirits, who could do us no good whatever. She read to us out of a book which she called the word of God, and when we returned to our village we told our people what we had heard, and we agreed to give up our spirit worship and believe in the true God and Jesus Christ, whom he had sent."

Thus wondrously had the seed sown by Rhoda Bronson sprung up and borne fruit in this dark corner of the earth, and her brief term of service had not been in vain. Though Jaipur was abandoned, and her grave and that of the sainted

Thomas left alone on the banks of the mighty Brahmaputra, sometimes a traveler pauses beside that sleeping dust. Rev. Mr. Paul, of Lakimpur, North India, wrote in the year 1899:

"During my journey I took in Jaipur, that historic ground, fraught with memories of the Browns, Cutters, and Bronsons; but the Jaipur of their day now exists in name only. I arrived in the evening. The next day I started out to find some old resident, and found a man who was a boy when our mission flourished there. He pointed out the site of the old compound, bungalows, mission-press, and schoolhouses, where three hundred scholars used to attend, and then took me into the jungle and showed me two heaps of brick. These must be the resting-places of Miss Rhoda Bronson and Mr. Thomas, but though surrounded now by the wilderness, angels will watch over this precious dust until the resurrection morning. As I walked the old street, overgrown with jungle, and looked on the beautiful scene, . . I felt I was on holy ground. When I remember it was here that Nidhi Levi, the first Assamese convert, was baptized, I felt Jaipur was not occupied in vain. New hopes for this place lie in the coming railroad. So I am trying to plant a church here which I hope will again become a center of much influence."

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DAWNING OF THE LIGHT

FOR five years the little mission band stationed at Sadiya, Jaipur, and on the Naga Hills had waited and prayed and labored, hoping that light would dawn on the surrounding darkness. As the watcher by some bed of pain grows weary during the long hours that precede the dawn, so toilers in mission fields turn longing eyes toward the dark sin-mountains where night has reigned unbroken. And when the first rosy beams of the Sun of Righteousness penetrate the gloom, how great their joy as they raise the glad cry, "Behold, the morning cometh!"

In the first school at Sadiya, where Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Cutter had gathered a few half-frightened boys, was a little fellow named Nidhi. He was a bright, intelligent lad, and after a while helped in the printing-office. He had obtained a fair knowledge of English, and one evening while alone he read a simple little prayer which deeply touched his heart, and he felt himself a sinner

needing a Saviour. Sobs and tears were heard repeatedly from his room during the night, where he knelt repentant and sleepless. Mr. Brown talked with him the next morning, and pointed him to the "Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world." But, like Bunyan's pilgrim, he still carried the burden until at last he found relief at the foot of the cross and went away rejoicing. A short time later Mr. Bronson had the great pleasure of baptizing this first convert from the Assamese, who was to be a most valuable helper and a shining light among his countrymen. He took the name of Levi Farwell, after a gentleman in America who was interested in him, but was usually called only Nidhi Levi.

As the first convert was from the Assamese, a change came over the policy of the mission, and for a long time, subsequent to Nidhi's conversion, labor was transferred from the hill tribes to the valley people, or the Assamese proper. Accordingly, in 1841, Mr. Bronson left the Naga Hills to establish a new and more central station among the Assamese at Nowgong, a village in the more thickly settled valleys. He regretted leaving the Nagas, but residence among them was becoming unsafe through tribal wars and fevers, from attacks of which they suffered.

Nowgong is beautifully situated on the Kullung

River, an arm of the Brahmaputra, and was an important center of civil and military jurisdiction. Captain Gordon, in command of the soldiers garrisoned there, was most kind to the newly arrived missionaries, and lent them every assistance in his power. A lifelong friendship sprang up between his wife and Mrs. Bronson. Mr. Bronson began at once to preach and distribute tracts in Assamese, and soon planned and started an institution for receiving orphan children, which he saw was greatly needed and which he believed would be of permanent value to the mission. He gathered in orphan and destitute children from every part of Assam, and trained them up under careful Christian influences. The most capable ones he intended to train for teachers. A day-school was taught, connected with the boarding department, and another school was also maintained in the village. This orphan institution was regarded as the most important of all the missionary operations, and the Bronsons bestowed upon it the most devoted labor. Mrs. Bronson wrote to a friend at home, "These orphans, frequently from the most degraded parts of Assam, are very near our hearts, and we long to hear them inquiring the way of salvation. But though still indifferent, we are sure that there will be a turning to the Lord ere

long. As trees bending over a dry watercourse are at last refreshed by the long-delayed moisture, so we have faith to believe that

"'It will come, it will not tarry, we shall not wait in vain;
Like the burst of sudden thunder, or the trickling, quiet rain,
A tranquil stream of blessing will well around our roots,
And the thrill of life will vibrate to our utmost budding shoots.

"'Oh, when all the land is silent, and lifeless, sad, and dumb,
From the snowy mountain ranges the sound of joy will come,
The shock of the ancient battle, for the storm, not the calm, comes first;
And from the unchained glaciers the river of life will burst.

"'Ringing new peals of triumph through all the sultry plain;
For the life and the light must conquer, and the dead must live again.
Therefore with loving patience we bend o'er these channels dumb,
Awaiting the vanished Presence and the life which is to come.'"

Meantime Mr. Bronson left Nowgong for a preaching tour through the adjacent villages, and joined Mr. Brown with tent and elephant, who was making a similar tour. Before his return they went to Gauhati, a station farther down the great river, where Mr. Barker and wife had been located since 1843, and an event of great interest occurred—the organization of the first church in Assam. On the twenty-fifth of January, 1845, Messrs. Brown, Bronson, and Barker drew up the articles of formation, and they, with the few native Christians, constituted themselves into the First Baptist Church of Assam, composed of the three branches of Sibsagor, Nowgong, and Gauhati, Sadiya and Jaipur having been abandoned. The Lord's Supper was celebrated in the evening, and all present rejoiced that the true light had at last indeed dawned upon dark Assam. Steadily it grew brighter; for before the end of that year there were twenty more baptisms of hopeful converts.

Five years had now passed since the founding of the orphan institution at Nowgong—years of effort and prayer; and at last the seed so faithfully sown had begun to spring up and bear fruit. An awakening came in the hearts of these orphans born of generations of heathen ancestors. With tears they confessed their sins and need of

a Saviour's forgiveness. The interest became so great that the school was suspended, and morning, noon, and night the scholars assembled for conversation on religious subjects and prayer, and to hear the word of God. Soon many were

First Converts at Sadiya, Assam

the joyful testimonies given as to what the Lord had done for them in removing the burden of sin. Mr. Bronson wrote concerning this happy time: "Day and night, whichever way I turn, I could hear the voice of prayer or the song of praise. The wondrous love of God in dying for sinful men seemed to be the theme which filled

every heart. Almost every member of the most advanced class has been received into the church, and a number express their desire to preach the gospel to their countrymen."

In the baptismal scene that followed this outpouring of the Holy Spirit the first Christian women of Assam were baptized by Mr. Brown. One of them was a young woman betrothed to Nidhi Levi, the first native convert. Kandura, a promising youth from the school, was also one of the candidates, named afterward for Mr. Rollin C. Smith, of America. He became, later, pastor of the Gauhati church and a native helper of great value. But before the candidates from the orphan institution were led down into the stream, Mr. Bronson had the great joy of baptizing his eldest daughter, Mary, then in her ninth year. It was a scene never to be forgotten. A glad volume of sacred song was wafted over the water, and crowds of wondering heathen gathered upon the shore to witness the unusual spectacle, as the little white-faced child and these dark-browed sons and daughters of Assam put on Christ in baptism.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE FIRST HOME-COMING

IN the new home at Nowgong, which had been erected beneath the shade of some noble peepul trees, the Bronsons passed many of their happiest years. Although they felt sorely the separation from kindred and friends, their hearts were comforted by the precious little ones God had entrusted to their keeping. In the home nest had gathered six little daughters, from Mary the eldest down to Frances Jane the darling baby and pet of the household. No mother ever loved her own children more than did Ruth Lucas Bronson, and tears often filled her eyes as she dreaded an approaching separation in the coming years which she knew must come.

There was one favorite tree near the bungalow beneath whose shelter the little ones liked to play, and hence was called "the children's tree." The sound of their happy laughter was often wafted to her ears, and she loved to listen to this innocent prattle and glee. In after years she often

glanced at the children's tree, and with streaming eyes repeated:

"O ye voices gone, sounds of other years,
Hush your haunting tones, melt me not to tears,
All around forgot, friends who loved you well,
Yet, sweet voices, yet o'er my soul ye swell.

"With the voice of spring, with the breath of flowers,
Floating back ye bring thoughts of vanished hours;
O ye voices gone, hence your music take,
Cease your haunting tone, lest my heart ye break."

Toward evening when the fierce heat of the sun had abated, the little girls and their parents frequently mounted on the back of the mission elephant, used in place of a pony, and enjoyed a ride around Nowgong, amid its beautiful tropical scenery.

Another missionary had long been needed and desired by the Bronsons to assist in carrying on the work of the orphan institution, and at last Rev. Ira Joy Stoddard and wife were sent to reenforce the Nowgong station. Their arrival was thus described by Mr. Stoddard:

"We reached Nowgong on a sultry summer evening, and were met at the ghaut, or landing-place, on the Kullung River, by Brother and Sister Bronson and their six little daughters, all dressed in white and looking cool and comfortable, while we were suffering from the intense heat. Mounting the large elephant which waited near we soon arrived at the bungalow, where we were warmly welcomed and entertained until our own house was ready. It was hard to become accustomed to the very different fare, especially to exchange American bread for rice three times a day—at breakfast, dinner, and supper."

Had it not been for the timely arrival of the Stoddards the orphan institution would of necessity have been suspended, as the health of both Mr. Bronson and his wife had failed, and rest and a change were demanded. As soon, therefore, as the new missionaries became familiar with the work the Bronsons began to prepare for a return to America for a season.

And now came the severest trial of their whole lives. If they took the children to America, it would be best to leave them there, to be reared in a more healthful climate and receive the advantages of education in a Christian land. For this was their birthright. But oh, how the fond parents shrank from such a sacrifice! How could

they sever the fondest ties of nature? How could they return to their lonely home, now, alas! desolate, after resigning their loved ones to the care of others? As they wept and prayed a vision rose before them of One dying on a cross, who had relinquished the glories of heaven to give his life as an atonement for sin, and he seemed to say to them, "Whoso taketh not up his cross and followeth after me, cannot be my disciple." And again the divine lips seemed to murmur, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." And yet again, "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

They fell upon their knees as this vision of Calvary faded from their view, and exclaimed with streaming eyes: "Dear Lord, we will do this for thee, and give up our all to help win this lost world for thee; only grant us strength to endure the trial." They faltered no longer, and felt that allegiance to their Master, and the work to which they had pledged their lives, and also their duty to their children, called for this supreme sacrifice. Their new associates, the Stoddards, could now assume charge of the work of the mission, and soon they made the necessary preparations for their long journey. The tender mother often glanced at the old peepul tree where her darlings

were at play, and sighed as she thought of the time when there would be no more childish prattle or laughter, but the space around the big tree be strangely silent. No wonder that she felt this to be the severest trial of her life, and shrank from so costly a sacrifice. And yet it must be made for the good of the children and also for the sake of the work to which she stood pledged.

The doctor had advised them not to take their youngest child, the baby Frances, on so long and trying a journey, so it was decided to leave her with Mrs. Stoddard, who would supply a mother's place as far as possible. She gave her devoted care and loved her almost as her own, for she was a remarkably lovely child. But, alas! the fond parents never saw her again on earth; for the heavenly Shepherd gathered this little lamb to his fold, to be forever safe from earthly ill. The sweet little one of only eighteen months was taken ill with a prevalent disease, and soon there was only a little grave over which the stricken mother might weep. Still, this was but one of the many sorrows that befell this heroic woman, incident to her life on the foreign field; and yet she said, "I can be nothing but a missionary."

With many tears they kissed baby Frances farewell and embarked on the native boats for Calcutta. Mr. Bronson took with him two native

lads from the orphan institution, named James Tripp and Lucien Hayden, bright, promising youths. In October, 1848, the little party left the dear home in Nowgong, beloved for its many happy associations, and after numerous delays arrived at Calcutta. They secured passage for America on board the ship Coquimbo, bound for Boston. Mrs. Cutter, whose health had failed, accompanied them to America, leaving her husband to labor on in Assam. The voyage proved long and perilous, and from the rough weather and the rolling of the ship they suffered much from seasickness. After they had been out twenty-six days a terrific gale overtook them not far from the Isle of France. Mr. Bronson wrote in his diary: "For days the wind had been increasing, and at 4 p. m. the crew began to take in sail. Heavy seas were rolling, so that the vessel labored dreadfully, shipping water every few minutes until there seemed danger of sinking. The captain said that, though he had been at sea sixteen years, he never knew a ship to roll so badly. They tried to heave to, but this only made matters worse, so had to let her scud. I put all the children to bed in their berths, and then got Ruth and Mrs. Cutter on the couch and sat down on the floor between them, and tried to keep them all quiet amid the dreadful scenes

around us. Waves mountain high; wind roaring and whistling through the rigging, making it hard for us to hear one another speak; and the blows of the waves against the poor ship's bulwarks resembling the stroke of a hundred hammers. Felt that it was only God's mercy that could save us, for death seemed near, or even a worse fate—to be cast out upon the rough billows in a little boat with our infant family to undergo all the hardships of shipwreck. Still, during prayer there came a sweet assurance that all would end well."

After many hours the gale abated, but the ship was leaking badly and had to be pumped every hour. It was feared they would be obliged to put in for repairs, but finally proceeded on their way as the leak was mended.

At another time the ship was nearly run down by a vessel much larger in size. The danger of collision was imminent, and had they been ten feet nearer one or the other must have gone down. It was indeed a narrow escape.

But one bright morning the good ship entered Boston harbor, the long voyage safely over, and the exiles landed on their dear home shore, glad and thankful to be in their native land again, after an absence of nearly thirteen years.

CHAPTER NINE

IN THE HOME LAND

DURING the homeward voyage Mr. Bronson's time was much occupied with the care of the children, as the feeble health of his wife made this necessary. But his mind was engrossed with the question, how best to present and press home the claims of the Assam mission to the churches in America. His thought was, would that I could make them realize the needs of the field and speedily send new recruits to reenforce the exhausted workers already there.

It was a great joy to Ruth Bronson to revisit the dear home of her girlhood, and place her little ones in the arms of their grandparents. The children were astonished at many things they saw for the first time in this strange, new country, and thought snowflakes were feathers flying through the air.

And now came the great question these parents had often asked themselves: Where shall we find suitable homes for our children? The way was

opened by a noble Christian woman in Philadelphia offering to take Mary, the oldest of the little flock, giving her a mother's love and care. And nobly did Mrs. Stokes discharge the obligations thus assumed.

The second daughter, Maria, was placed in a school, and here a home was wonderfully provided for her. In the village of Springfield, N. Y., resided a Mrs. Davis Cotes, who kept a seminary for young ladies. She was well known for her liberality and kindness of heart, and was a most consecrated Christian woman. She became interested in Maria, and finally offered to adopt the child, saying to the parents that she had always desired to become a foreign missionary herself, but the way had not opened. Still, she felt she could be of service by taking the children of missionaries, and thus enable the parents to return to their fields of labor abroad. Finally she adopted three of these little daughters, and lavished upon them the most devoted care and affection, often displaying the rare unselfishness which was the most beautiful trait in her character. Surely, a nobler spirit never dwelt upon this earth. The deep gratitude of the parents can be seen in this extract from a letter written by Doctor Bronson to Mrs. Cotes on his seventieth birthday:

"My Dear Sister: I do not forget to-day that it was by your kind and benevolent aid in taking those three sisters to your home and heart that we were enabled to return to our distant field of labor and continue the work we had undertaken. My whole heart thanks you to-day."

Soon after the adoption of their second daughter, her parents took another of their little girls, Eliza, to visit her sister, Maria, in her new and pleasant home. She was so delighted with all she saw that she wanted to live there too. So, looking up into the face of Maria's adopted mother, she plaintively exclaimed, "They have found no home for me, yet!" Touched by the remark, Mrs. Cotes replied, "I am willing to take this child, also"; and these sisters remained together, much to the joy of their parents.

Harriette, the fourth little daughter, was adopted by a wealthy family in Philadelphia, and was thought too, to have found an excellent home. Sophia, the youngest of the group, was placed in the family of her uncle, Mr. Westle Bronson. Thus, as Mrs. Bronson often gratefully said, "The Lord provides especially for the children of missionaries."

During this year at home came the sad tidings of the death of sweet little Frances Jane, left with

kind Mrs. Stoddard in far-off Assam. The poor mother's heart was crushed with sorrow because she would never see the pet lamb of the fold again, nor have the comfort of her presence on their return to the lonely home. But at last she was comforted by the sweet assurance that it was "well with the child."

Mr. Bronson, accompanied by James and Lucien, the two lads from the orphan institution, visited the churches whenever possible, and made addresses in behalf of the Assam mission. His chief anxiety was how best to awaken interest in this most needy field, and his earnest appeals for more men and money to carry on the work were long remembered.

And now approached the time to return to their field of labor, and arrangements were made to procure a passage to India. A vessel had been secured by the Missionary Union to carry out a large company of missionaries, and many pioneers in the service were returning, together with newly appointed laborers. Brief farewell visits were made to the dear children in their new homes, and then they turned their faces again toward the Orient.

But almost at the last moment a matter for anxiety arose in regard to Harriette, the fourth daughter. She had been placed in a home in

Philadelphia, but her parents found that she would be brought up in a worldliness of which they could not approve, and also be kept apart from her sisters and relatives as much as possible. The foster-parents wished her to become entirely their own, and this seemed so selfish and unreasonable that the child was taken away from this home of wealth and fashion, rather than be permitted to grow up in such environments. Thus, at almost the last moment, her father made a hurried trip to Philadelphia, and took Harriette away to Boston, and placed her on board the ship which was to convey her parents to India. In a letter to an intimate friend, Mr. Bronson wrote in regard to this unexpected event:

"You will be surprised to know that we did not feel willing to leave Harriette in Philadelphia. As we knew of no other good home where we dare leave her on so short a notice, we are taking her back to the jungles of Assam. We feel sad about it, but try to view God's hand in the matter. Perhaps he saw that the poor mother's heart would be crushed to go back with none to prattle away her grief, and therefore leads us in this way. We saw so few grounds of hope that our wishes concerning our dear child would be carried out, we decided, after much prayer and deep

agony of soul, to take her away. Tell her sisters, Maria and Eliza, that they must not feel sad because their sweet little sister is going back with us, who would have been so lonely without one of our children. God willing, we shall send her back to America some day to complete her education."

And now took place one of the most impressive farewell services ever held in Boston, when thirty missionaries and their families set sail for distant lands, amid the hearty Godspeed and handshaking of friends and relatives on shore. There were missionaries to Assam, Burma, and China, and to Southern India also, some among them gray-haired veterans and others just starting in the service. Ever remembered will be such names as Vinton, Wade, Kincaid, Ward, and Bronson. Handkerchiefs fluttered as the ship moved slowly out of the harbor, and the crowd assembled along the wharf sang to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne" these touching and beautiful words:

"Hail, dearest, sweetest tie that binds
Our glowing hearts in one;
Hail, sacred hope that tunes our minds
To harmony divine.

It is the hope, the blessed hope,
That Jesus' grace has given,
The hope when days and years are past,
We all shall meet in heaven.

"What, though, where heathen darkness reigns
In many a dreary spot,
What, though, beneath an Eastern sun
Be cast thy distant lot;
From Burma's shores, from Afric's strand,
From India's burning plain,
From China, from Columbia's land,
We hope to meet again.

"No lingering look, no parting sigh,
Our future meeting knows;
There, friendship beams from every eye,
And love immortal grows.
Hail, to this hope, this blessed hope,
When hearts with grief are riven;
The hope, when years and days are past,
We all shall meet in heaven."

CHAPTER TEN

ON BOARD THE WASHINGTON ALSTON

THE good ship moved slowly out of the harbor, with its precious freight of missionaries, and as she moved onward the last sound heard from their native shores were the words:

"We all shall meet in heaven at last,
We all shall meet in heaven;
The hope when days and years are past,
We all shall meet in heaven."

And this sweet assurance comforted their hearts, aching over the separation. An event occurred before their arrival at the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, which caused the vessel to be gaily decorated from stem to stern with the national colors and bunting, in celebration of the birth of a little daughter to Mr. and Mrs. Bronson. All went well until, after landing at the Cape for a few days' sojourn, the tiny stranger was taken ill with a disease then prevalent among children there, and its short life was ended. The English

residents were very kind to the grief-stricken parents, and a family where they were staying offered a place in their own burial-lot for the grave of the little one, by the side of their own infant daughter. It comforted the mother's heart to know that the resting-place of her darling would be watched over and tended by loving hands when she was far away.

And deep was the gratitude of these parents when later they received a letter from these dear Christian friends, saying that they had erected a monument over the little graves, with an inscription for both children. This was, indeed, "a cup of cold water" given in "His name," that will not lose its reward. That bereaved mother, turning tearfully from the grave of little Martha in South Africa, and bending sorrowfully over the grave of baby Frances Jane in the mission cemetery at Nowgong, who had died during their absence in America, could well exclaim:

"They have gone to heaven before us,
But they turn and wave their hand,
Pointing to the glories o'er them
In that holy, happy land."

The ship proceeded on its way from the Cape of Good Hope to Calcutta, with mostly favorable weather, until near the Andaman Islands, in

the Bay of Bengal, when a terrible hurricane arose which nearly resulted in shipwreck.

One evening toward sunset the sky assumed an ominous aspect. Leaden clouds overspread the horizon and blotted out the splendor of the dying day. As yet there was no breeze, but a faint ripple began to ruffle the calm surface of the ocean, and orders were quickly given to take in the sails. Suddenly the wind broke loose from almost every quarter, and like a screaming fury whistled through the rigging and drove the vessel before it with sails now closely reefed. Whirling with cyclonic velocity, it shook the shuddering ship and almost lifted it off the waters, which now ran high as mountains, ever and anon breaking over the decks as if threatening to engulf their prey. The hatches were securely fastened to keep out the drenching spray, and below, the terrified passengers, unable to sleep, were upon their knees praying for preservation from the appalling dangers around them. They trembled before the awful force of the tempest, which had now developed into a hurricane and blew with inconceivable violence. They realized that only by a miracle of Providence would the ship be able to survive the storm. Mighty seas swept upward and onward, with the blast bearing the helpless vessel aloft in their embrace, and when the

vast ranges of water had collapsed, it fell into a yawning gulf below, where giant waves above threatened it with destruction. But rising again and again from its terrible battle with the elements, it fought bravely for its life amid the seething billows. Above the terrifying sounds outside they heard faintly the voice of the captain shouting orders through his trumpet to the crew. The pitching and tossing was so great none could stand on their feet, and everything in the cabin that was not fastened was rolling about in the wildest confusion. So they remained upon their knees during the long hours of the fearful night and prayed. It was well they could not see the furious surface of the ocean, nor the ghostly eddies of spume whirling from the wind-lashed waves. It seemed as if the sky, air, and water were in the throes of some great convulsion.

Suddenly a cry arose on deck which blanched to greater whiteness every cheek, "Breakers ahead!" Paralyzed with fear, all waited for some dire happening. Presently the captain, clothed in oilskins, came down the companionway and, entering the cabin, exclaimed, "I can do no more to save the ship! Pray as you never prayed before, for we are heading straight for the breakers off the Andaman Islands, and we are lost unless the direction of the wind changes. And even

if we should reach the shore we can see the natives gathering along the beach to attack and destroy us."

Above the wild uproar of the gale again arose the voice of prayer and earnest entreaty that the vessel might not be driven upon the cruel rocks, nor the cause of missions suffer the disaster of losing so many of its workers. As if in answer to this united supplication, the wind suddenly changed to the opposite direction and the ship, as if by a hand's breadth, passed the edge of the nearest breaker unharmed. As the waves rolled in and broke over the jagged edges of the rocks, it seemed truly a miracle that their prey had escaped, and fervent were the thanksgivings that ascended from the hearts of all on board the vessel.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

AGAIN ASCENDING THE BRAHMAPUTRA

FTER this terrible experience in the Bay of Bengal, the missionary, Mr. Cutter, whose wife had returned from America with the Bronsons in much improved health, had come down from Assam to meet her, and the two families prepared to ascend the great river in company. They each procured a seven-oared bolio, or boat, besides a cook-boat and several baggage boats.

After a month's stay in Calcutta, during which they purchased various needful articles for the mission and for household use, they pushed off from the old baboo ghat, or wharf, on their long journey up the river.

One day, soon after their departure, Mr. Bronson waited for Mr. Cutter's boat to overtake them at a place called Sibsagor, a village in the midst of a dense population. On every side were groups of worshipers adoring the sacred river, for they were still in the river Ganges. An extract from a diary kept by Mr. Bronson states:

"At two o'clock we entered the Pordah River,

The Brahmaputra, near Gauhati

one of the main branches of the Ganges, and very broad. My heart is saddened by the sight of the people on every side worshiping the river, and either prostrating themselves in the water or sitting placidly in the mud along the shore. There were many scenes of distress—dead and dying persons were placed with their feet in the water, while their friends sat about unconcerned, trying to keep away the vultures and crows that sought to prey in advance upon the almost lifeless bodies. Meantime, fuel was being collected upon the bank for the purpose of burning them as soon as life was extinct, and this in their very sight. If I walk on the shore it is often difficult to avoid stepping on the skulls of bodies that have been thrown into the river, the holy stream which these poor natives believe flows down from heaven. O sin! What hast thou done in this fair land where nature is so beautiful? Come, O blessed Messiah, gird on thy sword and subdue this people to thyself! Had some sweet thoughts of our Lord's coming glory in his church militant, and church triumphant."

Another extract from his journal says: "We proceeded well on our way, when one morning about nine o'clock, while under sail, the boat struck a snag, a few inches under water, with such violence as to break two planks in her bot-

tom. We were terribly jarred, and the water rushed in rapidly till we were in danger of sinking. The native boatmen came nobly to the rescue, and we reached the shore in safety. On examining the boat we found it badly injured, and that it was necessary to draw it ashore and thoroughly repair the large hole in the bottom. A native carpenter was found in a village near-by, and everything was taken out of the boat and piled upon the sandbank, so it could be pulled ashore more easily. I heard of an Englishman, a sugar dealer, and sent him word of the accident, as he was only a short distance away. He hastened to us at once, and aided me to find fifty men to drag the boat ashore. But we could not turn the boat over for want of more bamboos. Were obliged to remain the rest of the day and that night on shore, and sleep in our tent. We felt anxious and uneasy on account of numerous robberies and murders which had been recently committed in this vicinity, but there was no alternative. We were poor helpless castaways. The next morning I succeeded in obtaining more bamboo, and by going into the water and turning carpenter myself we were enabled to repair the breach by dusk.

"I then called all hands, and got the boat once more into the water. I had paid the natives who came from the village a handsome reward, but

they demanded more and were very boisterous. They refused to leave until I gave them more, and when at last they withdrew used very threatening language, saying they would return that night and do something to us that would detain us still longer. There was no English magistrate near to hold them in check, and therefore our peril was very great. The only white man around, the Englishman who had befriended us, said he had defended himself the day before, only through his guns, from two hundred angry natives, who otherwise would have robbed and killed him. The boats of my companion, Mr. Cutter, had gone on so far beyond that I could not send him word of our misfortune, so we were all alone in these circumstances of danger. I ordered my boatmen to go to work quietly and put all things again aboard, erect their masts, and push off from the village. They did all this so quickly that by eleven o'clock we had gone some miles from the native settlement and lay to for the night, truly thankful for our preservation from wicked and unreasonable men.

"The two following days we pressed on and arrived at Seragunge at ten o'clock at night. We had hoped to hear from Brother and Sister Cutter at this place, but found nothing at the post-office. Sent men to inquire, but could hear nothing of

them. We remained here over the Sabbath and heard by accident that they were waiting for us about five miles below. I walked down to the place, and found these dear friends very anxious for our safety. Brother Cutter had hired a boat to go down the river in search of us. Their boats came up stream to the spot where ours were fastened, and we all joined in a sweet season of worship and praise to our kind Preserver.

"In the afternoon a severe storm arose suddenly. Our boats were in great danger, and broke loose from their moorings. It was with difficulty we could keep them from foundering, and had to put forth every effort. A few days later another fearful gale overtook us, which lasted two hours. The waves dashed into the windows, and I had to leap out into the water to help fasten the boats to the shore. Such tempests are sudden and frequent, and cause exciting scenes in river travel. Another great peril was from falling banks of sand, which, continually caving in, often swamp boats too near them. We are thankful for the company of the dear Cutters on this hazardous journey. May we reach its end in safety."

CHAPTER TWELVE

AN EARNEST INQUIRER

AS the travelers ascended the Brahmaputra River and caught sight of the beautiful hills of Assam, they felt they were nearing home; for it was home to them, although on a foreign shore. When they entered the mouth of the Kullung River, on which the town of Nowgong is situated, they found so strong a current that it was difficult to make any headway. There were no possibilities for poling or gooning, which consists of men walking along the shore and pulling the boats by a rope, and there was but very little wind for sailing, so that progress was slow. After several days they reached Jagee, a stopping-place not far from the station, and were there greeted by a native brother, Jurimon, and several lads from the orphan institution, who brought word that all was well at Nowgong. Traversing the short distance that remained, they were warmly welcomed by their dear missionary associates, the Stoddards, who had been left in sole charge during their

absence. They entered their long-closed bungalow, thankful that one little daughter remained to enliven the else desolate home, now, alas, so empty and silent.

Their first visit was to the little mission cemetery where baby Frances Jane had been laid to rest. Although tears fell fast upon her tiny grave, the mourning parents tried to think of her

A Modern Steamer on the Brahmaputra River

as a babe in glory—safe, sheltered from earthly ill.

Mr. Bronson began again to teach and preach the gospel, and see the many inquirers who desired to know more about the true religion. The case of one of these, a middle-aged man named Hadhiram, interested him exceedingly. He saw him standing a long time on the veranda one day, and evidently wishing to see some one. Upon asking his errand, he replied that he was a poor, burdened man, in much distress of mind, and had come from a village a few hours distant to ask an interview with the white teacher who had come

from the Western continent, where only the one true God was worshiped. He himself had been reviled by his people because he preferred to worship but one God. His father also believed in but one true God, and so taught his sons, but after his death his brothers had gone back to idol worship. He was associated with them in raising bullocks and buffaloes, and in the cultivation of land, but he felt he could continue thus no longer, for he feared the true God would be angry. In his distress of mind he had fallen ill, and though now recovered, he did not know what course to pursue or how to regain his peace of mind. Mr. Bronson talked a long time with him, and explained to his bewildered soul the way of salvation. Then he sent him back to his village, telling him to return soon and bring an old native priest who, he said, believed as he did.

In a few days Hadhiram came again, but alone, bringing a message from the old priest that he was too feeble to accompany him, but had sent the sacred book which he treasured highly, as it had been given to him by a white teacher a long time ago, and agreed with his sentiments concerning the true God. This valued book proved to be a tract, "The True Refuge," which had been distributed in many villages. The following day was the Sabbath, and the man attended services in the

mission chapel, where it was touching to see his solemnity and interest in the preaching and anxiety to learn the truth. After a day or two, he said he must return to his people as they would be anxious about him. Mr. Bronson promised to pray for him, that his distress of mind might soon pass away in realizing the love of God as revealed in Christ. He also requested the white sahib to come and visit him at his village soon.

A week later Mr. Bronson, as soon as he could leave his duties at Nowgong, started for Hadhiram's village, taking with him Jurimon, a native preacher. They found it farther than they had supposed, and took four hours of travel. He was told that Hadhiram was at the house of the old "guru," or priest, and both were very glad to see the white sahib. Hearing of their arrival a goodly number assembled, and one side of the house was taken away that all might see and hear. They listened attentively, and at the close of the missionary's remarks begged for tracts and books. A whole copy of one of the Gospels was given to the old priest, which greatly pleased him. All promised to ponder carefully the truths they had heard, and Mr. Bronson could not but hope that from the impressions made that day fruit might spring up to the glory of the Master.

On the return trip they stopped for rest and

shelter from the heat of the sun, and entered a small shop by the roadside. A curious crowd gathered, and among them some high-caste Brahmins and merchants from Northern India.

Missionary Laborers at Nowgong, Assam

These began a loud raillery against the white man's practice of eating meat, which, they declared, the Hindus never permitted. For, according to their belief in the transmigration of the soul, the life of a beast is of as much value as the

life of a man. If one eats the flesh of a cow, or of fowls or eggs, they might contain the soul of his mother or father or grandmother, or some great personage, and therefore would be equal to the sin of murder. The soul on leaving the body was believed to pass through so many successive existences it takes long years to complete the cycle of its changes. That of a certain individual was thought to have passed into the body of an antelope, and then into that of a dormouse, then an elephant, a whale, a bee, a rabbit, a wren, a horse, and a dog. After the death of the dog the soul was again said to have passed into a human form, and the transmigration from a higher to a lower state of existence was for the time ended. It was in vain to tell these benighted Brahmins that God had given man the animals to eat, and they continued to argue and scoff. At last they listened quietly to the teaching of the sahib, and he soon resumed his journey, pained at the delusions with which Satan fills the human heart wherever ignorant of the pure principles of Christianity.

They arrived home by evening, exhausted with the labors of the day, but trusting that "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," would shine into these dark hearts to give the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

EVANGELISTIC BOAT TOURS

THERE are many large rivers in India, such as the Indus, Ganges, Hoogly, Brahmaputra and its tributaries. Boat tours upon these streams are an important feature of missionary labor throughout India, Burma, and China. There is no better way to carry the gospel to the scattered population of the villages along the banks than to travel up and down the streams. Thousands would never hear of Christ without this evangelizing agency. Seed has been sown that sprang up and bore fruit unto life everlasting.

A missionary was once preaching to a throng from an adjacent village, when he noticed a woman in the crowd who seemed to be endeavoring to keep out of sight as much as possible. But in the few glimpses he obtained of her face he saw that she was listening eagerly to the truth. At the close of his discourse he hastened to seek the woman, but she had disappeared, and he never saw her again. Fourteen years later a fine-look-

ing Hindu lad came to the home of the missionary and asked for an interview. He said he had promised his dying mother to seek out the white teacher who first told her on the river bank the story of Jesus Christ the Saviour, and that she had learned from the book he gave her not to worship idols but to trust in him alone. His father, a high-caste Brahmin, would have beaten his mother if he had known she believed in the foreign religion.

"From the time I was two years old," continued the boy, "she taught me to pray to the one true God, and every night we whispered together the dear name of Jesus, for we dared not speak it aloud." Ah, how this once heathen mother, with her little light, reaped the reward of her faithfulness to her child! For he became a pupil of the mission school and an earnest believer in the Christian religion, and also a faithful worker.

Mr. Bronson devoted much time to these evangelistic tours among the villages. A mission boat was kept expressly for this purpose, and occasionally he went alone, and then again took his wife and little daughter, Harriette, with him on the river journey. There were snug sleeping accommodations on this boat, but no room for culinary uses, so a cook-boat followed, where the

native cook prepared the meals. When they were ready he pulled alongside the "budgerow," or large boat, and proceeded to set the table and serve up the meal in a style amusing to an American. The repast ended, he removed the dishes

A Mission Boat and Attendants

and withdrew to the cook-boat, where he washed up and prepared for the next meal. At nightfall the native captain bade his boatmen fasten the boat to the shore, as it is not safe to travel after dark on these waters. A sandbank was usually chosen near which to anchor the vessel, and large fires were kindled to keep away the savage beasts

that lurked in the adjoining jungles and are afraid of fire. The boatmen cooked their simple meal of rice, and often on pleasant evenings a tent would be pitched on the bank in preference to sleeping on the boat, forming quite a rural encampment. Then, with the river flowing gently at their feet, murmuring a lullaby, and the starlit heavens above them, while the dusky boatmen were stretched out before the great watch-fire, they gave themselves to slumber, protected by Him whose guardian care enabled them to lie down and sleep in safety. Although alone in the jungle, wild beasts were never permitted to harm them; nor was their frail boat wrecked; so they felt they were kept as in the hollow of His hand from dangers seen and unseen.

And if there was romance in this tenting out at night upon these Indian rivers, it was scarcely less romantic to travel on them by day. In places where the jungles had been cleared away, native settlements extended for miles in the midst of as beautiful scenery as ever met the eye. Imagine an Oriental landscape, with a fertile plain surrounded by ranges of hills through which flows a river whose banks are shaded by groves of tropical trees. The thatched huts of the villagers are interspersed among this wealth of foliage with picturesque effect, while not far away are

the numerous rice, or paddy fields, making a vivid contrast with the rich green of the adjacent grass, which grows with a luxuriance unknown in northern climes. Over all is the blue of a cloudless sky; and even yet one can hardly form an idea of the beauty of these heathen villages.

Mr. Bronson visited them in succession, stopping long enough to preach and distribute tracts and Testaments. The shrine of some hideous idol was always in a conspicuous part of the village street, and there its worshipers would bow down and present offerings of fruits and flowers. The missionary stood near and told these ignorant idolaters of the only true God and the way of salvation. Many listened and took the tracts and Gospels, while others scoffed and disputed. He most frequently visited the villages that bordered on the streams tributary to the Brahmaputra, such as the Kullung and Kopillie Rivers. One spot on the Kopillie River was so beautiful it reminded one of a scene described in South American forests. Trees, perhaps centuries old, reared their giant heads aloft, and the air was vocal with the songs of countless birds. At the edge of the forest began a grassy slope, variegated with wild flowers of brilliant hues. A gentle breeze played in the treetops, and the dense branches were reflected in the placid water be-

neath. Ranges of mountains with their foothills rose in the distance, throwing a sterner beauty over the scene, which made it sublime as well as beautiful. And the river, winding its way through that wild country, looked like a thread of silver glistening in the sunbeams. It was, indeed, a scene where

> "Every prospect pleases,
> And only man is vile."

And, as he gazed, the devoted missionary added sadly:

> "In vain with lavish kindness
> The gifts of God are strewn,
> The heathen in his blindness
> Bows down to wood and stone."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

IN PERILS OFT

WHILE there was the romance of the river travel, there were also grave dangers to which the frail native boats were exposed.

One day while keeping close to the shore, in order the more easily to stem the powerful current, Mr. Bronson and his party came to a lofty sandbank which, rising almost perpendicularly, menaced the safety of any boat beneath. If, instead of passing under, they went out into the middle of the stream, there was the peril of being swept down by the current; so it was decided to venture passing under the bank, as it looked firm, with no appearance of an immediate slide. But just as they were fairly beneath the sand began to move, and an avalanche threatened to overwhelm them. The only chance of escape was to push out as quickly as possible into the middle of the river, and the boatmen worked desperately to accomplish this. Wading knee-deep in water, and shouting in their native tongue, they

succeeded before the heavy masses of sand came tumbling down. It was, indeed, a very narrow escape.

At another time the voyagers were in danger from the threatened attack of a wild elephant. These huge beasts usually go in herds in India, and when one is seen alone it is a bad sign, and an indication that he is mad. Mad elephants are very dangerous, and in their fury often destroy everything in their way. As they resort to the banks of rivers in their solitary rage, boats anchored there are in great peril, for these frail native craft are easily demolished by the trunk and feet of the infuriated animal.

The boat had been fastened to the shore as usual one evening, and all had retired to rest except Mr. Bronson. He remained up until a late hour, and then laying aside his writing went out into the open air to enjoy the extreme beauty of the night. The mission boat was all alone in that wild region, but the Eye that neither slumbers nor sleeps was watching over its precious freight and protecting from peril. It was almost midnight when Mr. Bronson went above, and the solemn stillness of the hour seemed unbroken. His eyes fell upon the farther bank of the river, which lay in deep shadow cast by the trees that grew down even to the water's edge. There was

one spot which had been partially cleared by the falling of the trees, and as he gazed in that direction he saw a dark, huge form emerge from the depths of the forest, amid a great crackling of the boughs. It stood within the clearing, only dimly revealed by the light of the moon, which had become obscured. It loomed bulky and shapeless amid the shadows until again the moon shone forth unclouded, when he discovered it was an elephant, and the largest one he had ever seen. As it was alone he knew that it was mad. A mad elephant! These were fear-inspiring words to him, as he thought of the loved ones sleeping below and realized their helpless situation. Oh, how he trembled for their safety! For, if the savage animal caught sight of the boat and attacked them, they were completely in his power. It would not avail to attempt to escape by flight upon the land in this dense region of jungles, and if they remained inside the boat they were not sufficiently armed to resist his brute strength. When the monster presently seemed to discover the boat, and plunging into the water swam directly toward it, speedy destruction seemed inevitable. Mr. Bronson watched the progress of the angry animal with unspeakable solicitude, and as he waited and prayed for deliverance from this terrible danger, the moments of suspense

seemed like hours. Arriving at the spot where the boat was fastened, the elephant remained perfectly motionless, as if hesitating whether to attack or not; and then, turning suddenly, swam off in the opposite direction. He did not inform the sleepers below of their preservation until the next morning, and it seemed truly a hairbreadth escape and a direct answer to prayer.

But perhaps the most formidable wild beast of India is the tiger. There is no more splendid animal in the world than the royal tiger of Bengal, with its lithe limbs and graceful proportions, and its skin so beautifully striped and marked. Some of them attain to a great age, size, and strength, one being once killed that measured over eight feet in length. If a tiger has once killed a human being and tasted blood, it prefers it to any other, and therefore, a "man-eater" is the terror of a community in the region it infests. Its approach is so stealthy and cunning that it seizes the poor victim before he is aware of any danger, and its spring is so quick and terrible that it seems but an instant before it is back in the jungle with its prey. Woe to the solitary traveler on whom it has fixed its gaze, for, unless some timely warning is given, his doom is sealed.

Mr. Bronson had a narrow escape from a tiger while on one of his boat tours. One evening, just

at sunset, he was walking on the sandbank near the outskirts of a jungle. He was on his way to a distant village, and as he was weary of confinement to the boat, thought he would take a solitary stroll upon the sand. He was accompanied by a little dog, "Trusty," who followed him everywhere, and was remarkable for his devotion to his master. He walked back and forth, absorbed in his reverie of home and the work he loved, and approached the jungle rather nearer than was prudent. Suddenly his attention was called to the singular behavior of the dog. Trusty had a keen scent, and it was evident he had detected something wrong.

Mr. Bronson spoke to the poor dog and tried to soothe him, but his terror seemed only to increase. The hair stood erect all over his body; he trembled and whined piteously, now and then uttering low growls of rage. With his tail between his legs, and shivering more than ever, he began to shrink backward from the jungle. Looking in that direction, Mr. Bronson saw a pair of fiery eyeballs fixed upon him with horrible intensity. He also detected a motion in the grass, as if some large body were moving stealthily through it. Knowing it must be a tiger he hastily fled to the boat, which fortunately was at no great distance. He felt very grateful to Trusty for the warning

he had given, as had it not been for his superior scent and watchfulness, unarmed, he would have fallen a prey to the savage creature, even then crouching for its spring.

A native who had captured an infant tiger in its mother's lair in the jungle brought it as a present to little Harriette Bronson. It was about the size of a cat, and very gentle and playful. While small it could not be dangerous, and became a great pet. It followed her everywhere, and when she took a walk trotted like a dog either before or behind her. The little girl felt quite proud of having a real live tiger for her body-guard. But, as her playmate grew older, he grew vicious, and it became unsafe to have him at large. A strong iron cage was procured in which he was confined, but this captivity did not please the wild son of the forest, and he seemed to pine for freedom, which, however, could nevermore be his. It was curious to see his natural savage instincts, although he had never mingled with any of his kind. He would ravenously devour a whole goat or sheep in a single day, and it became difficult to supply his table with the necessary live stock. It was thought advisable to send the animal to Calcutta for sale to some menagerie, and probably it was then placed on exhibition as a fine specimen of the royal Bengal tiger.

Reptiles and insects are numerous in Assam, as they are in all Eastern climes. Soon after sunset the stillness of the tropical evening is disturbed by the hum of a myriad of insects. Fireflies flash through the gathering darkness; bugs and gorgeous-hued beetles come forth from their hiding-places and creep upon the ground; swarms of mosquitoes hover in the air; while in the bungalow small house lizards dart across the ceilings. But far worse than the annoyances caused by this teeming insect life are the deadly reptiles that abound. Among the snakes, the most formidable is the huge python, or boa-constrictor, often thirty feet in length, and capable of swallowing a deer or a man whole.

The cobra de capello, also called the "hooded snake," is one of the most venomous snakes in India. Its poison will kill a dog in less than half an hour, and a chicken in less than half a minute. As they are small in size, they often glide into houses and hide away where no one suspects their presence, until struck by their deadly fangs. One of the Assam missionaries found a cobra coiled up between the sheets of his bed one night when ready to retire, but sprang back before the unwelcome intruder could inflict any injury.

The "whipsnake" is a curious reptile, and receives its name from the fact that it does not

bite, but whips its prey to death with its powerful tail. Two large snakes of this class had their lurking-place near the mission compound, and twice a year they would sally forth to the great terror of all who saw them. Attempts to kill them had for a long time proved unsuccessful. But one sultry Sabbath, while religious services were being held in the chapel, a cry was heard outside, "The snakes! The snakes!" A native rushed through the open door half dead with fright, and said the two great whipsnakes had come out of their hiding-places and were moving about outside. The services were at once suspended, and hastening to the doors two monstrous snakes were seen gliding hither and thither and lashing the ground in fury. The men present, armed with whatever weapons were available, ventured forth to attack the foe. The natives, always cowardly, were headed by the whites, and shouted loudly as if to keep up their courage. After a desperate fight, while their snakeships whipped everything within their reach in unavailing fury, they were despatched, and their skins saved as trophies of the memorable encounter.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

IN A LAND OF SUPERSTITION

THE perils of river navigation and attacks of wild animals were not the only dangers to which the missionaries were exposed. The poisonous miasma of the jungles caused a severe type of fever, which fastened itself upon foreigners soon after their arrival. Jungle fever is dreaded by all Europeans, and not infrequently it drives them from the country. It is only love of gain or a sense of duty that will hold one to his post. Mr. Bronson was seized with a severe attack while on his first journey up the Brahmaputra, and every subsequent year of his stay in India he was subject to attacks of this disease.

At one time when he had gone overland on his elephant, to visit a village in the interior, he was seized with an attack of jungle fever, and obliged to send home for help to return. His wife was startled by the appearance of a native bringing her a note written in a trembling hand by her husband, containing this message:

"DEAR RUTH: I am very ill. Send me help and means of returning at once. I am suffering greatly."

A litter was quickly procured and sent by trusty men to the sick one, and he was brought home, and with careful nursing soon rallied. He said that his deafness in later years, he thought, was caused by taking large quantities of quinine to break up this troublesome fever.

But the cholera is far more terrible than the fever. Every hot season it comes from the pestilence-breeding jungles, and sweeps away its victims by scores and hundreds. The natives think their gods are angry, and seek to appease them with offerings; while tomtoms, or rude drums, are beaten almost constantly to drive away the evil spirits, who are supposed to hover around and do all the harm possible. But, alas! they find all efforts unavailing to stay the ravages of the grim destroyer as it stalks amid the dying and the dead.

One summer, when the death-rate was unusually large in Nowgong, Mr. Bronson obtained a large supply of cholera-drops and gave some to any who asked for the medicine. The terror-stricken natives, finding this remedy more efficacious than their frantic appeals to their gods,

flocked ever after in large numbers to the white sahib, who had the means to help them. The Assam mission lost three of its valued missionaries through the cholera—Mr. Scott, Mr. Dauble, and Miss Marie Bronson—workers who were missed and lamented.

The hearts of Mr. and Mrs. Bronson were often deeply pained by the gross superstition and cruel practices around them. The prevalent heathen idea of gaining merit, or favor with their gods, was manifest on every hand. In a shed not far distant from their bungalow was a place fitted up for voluntary torture, where large iron hooks were fastened to the ends of ropes suspended from the roof, and those who wished to obtain special favor with the gods submitted to having the hooks thrust into their bare backs, and then to being swayed backward and forward by others pulling the ropes. The more the backs were lacerated the greater the amount of merit gained by the deluded sufferer.

One day a man was seen by Mr. Bronson crawling slowly along on his hands and knees, and seemingly exhausted. He inquired where he was going, and the poor man replied that he was on a pilgrimage to their sacred city of Benares, and in order to gain greater merit had vowed to travel the whole distance on his hands and knees. But

these had become so raw and painful, he feared that he could not complete the journey. The missionary knelt down beside him and told the glad tidings of free and full salvation through Christ, without any works of merit on the part of the sinner. The poor, ignorant, thirsty soul drank in the truth with eagerness, and listened, weeping, to the old, old story, so new to him, as he had never heard it before. How sweet was the joy of pointing him to the "Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world."

The great car of Juggernaut, one of the famous idols of India, was drawn annually in triumphal procession by hundreds of natives, amid the beating of drums, clashing of cymbals, and scenes of the wildest confusion. The car was a huge platform, supported by wheels, on which were placed images of the god, under canopies of silk and cloth of gold, richly ornamented. Juggernaut was a hideous-looking idol, although provided with golden hands and feet, which the priests took off every night and put on every morning. Occasionally devotees of the god would throw themselves in front of the car, to be crushed to death by its ponderous wheels; a sad result of fanaticism. This is now suppressed by the English government.

The car of Juggernaut on its annual journey

went past the bungalow, and saddened their hearts as they gazed upon its vain magnificence.

The goddess Kali, the wife of Siva, the god of destruction, is one of the most dreaded of the Hindu deities. She also is a destroyer, and the patroness of murder; hence, on account of her bloody disposition, the poor natives seek to appease her in every possible way.

A Village Chapel

An old hut on one of the streets in Nowgong had been converted into a rude temple for the worship of this goddess, and an image of her placed inside. As a portion of the front wall of the building had been taken away, and the door always stood open, the horrible idol was plainly visible. She was represented as a gigantic female, of swarthy color, and with a countenance

most ferocious and cruel in expression. Her long, disheveled hair hung loosely over her shoulders and reached down to her feet. She had red and fiery eyes, while streaks of blood were on her lips and eyebrows. Her protruding tongue hung over her chin, and for earrings she wore two dead bodies. She had four arms, and in one hand held a glittering sword, and in another a human head, and in the others battle-axes. The girdle around her loins consisted of bloody hands cut off from the bodies of her foes, and her necklace was made of skulls, reaching down to her waist. In their morning drives the Bronsons frequently passed by the shrine of this most repulsive idol, and witnessed the vain adoration of her worshipers. Ah, how they longed to dispel the superstition which enshrouded these sitting in darkness!

Durga is another name for Kali, or the wife of Siva, and there is a night festival every year in her honor which is attended with much feasting, shouting, and dancing, while her devotees march round and round her image, laying offerings at its feet. It is called the "Durga-Poojah," and participated in by thousands.

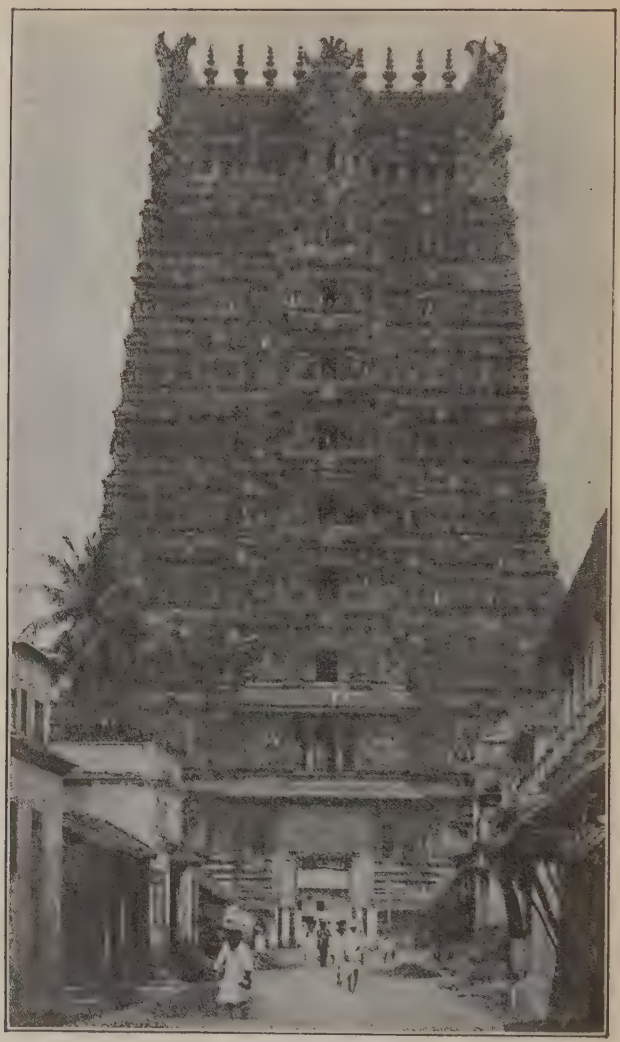
Another god, Ram, is very popular in Assam, and many of the given names among the natives end in ram, in his honor, such as Batiram, Rudram, and Addiram. One of the favorite bap-

tismal hymns ends with this verse in the Assamese language, Romanized:

"*Barat bhar, Hindu dham, prior Trancotar nam;*
Asroy kori aru ne buliboh Ram."

The translation of this is:

"Slowly the Hindu religion
Will give place to faith in the
dear Saviour;
And trusting in him,
They will no longer call upon
Ram to deliver."



A Hindu Temple

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

PARTING WITH THE LAST LITTLE DAUGHTER

THE home life of the Bronsons in this far land of the Orient was truly a happy one. Although separated from four of their dear children, they knew they were under safe guardianship, and strove to be reconciled to the trial. The little daughter remaining to them was a great comfort and joy to their otherwise lonely hearts. As there were no white children in Nowgong, she was allowed to have for a playmate little Aitie, the daughter of one of the native preachers, who had been carefully kept by her parents from the corrupting influence of the heathen children around her. Harriette and Aitie had many good times together, until the former was sent to America to receive her education. Aitie afterward became the wife of Kandura, a native preacher, who proved to be one of the most valuable helpers of the Assam mission, and was pastor of the church at Gauhati during the absence of the missionary stationed there. She made him an excellent helpmeet, and

assisted him in his duties in every way possible, teaching and watching over the native Christian women, who were formed by her into a class for religious instruction.

Harriette Bronson was a bright, active child, and fond of study, and though there was no school for her to attend she had daily lessons, with her mother as teacher, and tried hard to keep up with her absent sisters. But the unhealthful climate began to tell upon the little girl, and the fond parents saw that to do their duty to the child they must send her away from this tropical clime, to enjoy the same advantages their own children were receiving. But how their hearts bled at the thought of separation from their last little daughter! A letter written by Mr. Bronson, some nine years later, portrays most touchingly the reasons why Harriette's mother returned with her to America:

"Nowgong, July 29, 1863.

"My Dear Daughter Harriette:

"Welcome, thrice welcome this day, the anniversary of the day when your parents received you as a precious gift from the Lord. That little, helpless one was devoted to God in infancy by her parents. Time passed on; the little one creeps, walks, runs, and almost before we are aware is

reading story books! At length, parted from all her sisters, she alone returns to her Indian home with her parents, and, ambitious to learn, establishes a miniature ladies' seminary, with rules and regulations; a system of fines and rewards; a register of credit marks and black marks for good or poor lessons, and tardy or prompt attendance. This wonderful seminary was unique, having only one solitary scholar, who every morning put on her bonnet, took her satchel of books and umbrella, and bidding her parents good morning, went out of one side of the house and came back into the other!

"But at length this little girl's cheeks became pale and sallow, and her parents saw they ought to send her away to a more healthful climate. They were unwilling to send her by the hand of strangers all that long, dangerous journey; so dear mamma was deputed to take the precious charge, while papa must stay alone at his post of labor two long years, which he gladly did, enduring the loneliness for the sake of the loved one. But, ah! how gladly he welcomed dear mamma back on her return.

"Is it possible that this same little girl is to-day in her nineteenth year, and climbing far away up the hill of science? Ah, dear Harriette, though oceans roll between us, and we have long been

parted, naught but death can ever sever the tie that binds parent and child. This day shall never pass without our living over these memories of the past, and imploring God's choicest blessings to rest upon you. The path of life which your heavenly Father has marked out for you is concealed from us, but he sees all the joy and sorrow in the cup you are to drink. May yours be a useful and happy life, that will be spent in the service of our King. And may we, parents and children, be permitted to meet yet again on earth, and after all our meetings and partings are over, form an unbroken family in heaven. With a birthday kiss,

"Your loving father,

"Miles Bronson."

As the time had now come for their child to leave them, they nerved themselves for the sacrifice. Sadly the little girl bade farewell to the scenes of her childhood; visited for the last time the garden, where under the shade of a large date tree her pet animals had been laid to rest, and among them the faithful dog, Trusty, who had warned her father of the stealthy approach of the tiger that night on the sandbank. Tearfully she clung to her old "ayah," or native nurse, who also wept bitterly at parting with her little

charge; and said "good-bye" to Nitie, her friend and playmate, but all the while resolving in her heart that she would return as soon as her education was completed, and engage in the missionary work of her parents. They entered the mission boat for the first stage of their long journey down the river to Calcutta, whither Mr. Bronson accompanied them. There he obtained passage for his wife and daughter on board a ship sailing for England, and bidding them a tearful farewell returned, all alone, to his field of labor at Nowgong. Oh, how desolate and empty seemed the old bungalow!

Mrs. Bronson and little Harriette embarked on the good ship Deogaum, and began the voyage of many long, weary weeks. They touched at the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, and while ashore for a few days went to the grave of baby Martha in the English cemetery, and the mother's heart was comforted by finding how carefully the spot was tended by those kind friends God had raised up for her in that hour of sorrow, when she had to lay her little one to rest in stranger soil.

The passage proved stormy, but they were preserved from dangers, and at last arrived safely at London. They went to a boarding-house kept by a Mrs. Moore, where missionaries going and returning usually made their headquarters. A

large package of mail had collected, awaiting Mrs. Bronson's arrival, and while looking it over she suddenly gave a cry of joy, and calling her little girl, clasped her in her arms, exclaiming, "God has answered my prayer, for Mrs. Cotes, who adopted your sisters, Maria and Eliza, has written, saying she will take you also!" Her happiness over this tidings was indeed great; for this brave mother had crossed the wide ocean not knowing where to place her child, but praying earnestly that God would incline the heart of this noble Christian woman to take this little daughter also, and she knew of no better home. Truly it seemed an answer to prayer, and took from her heart an untold burden. They again embarked for New York on the sailing packet Liverpool, and were met on their arrival by Mrs. Cotes and her husband, and accompanied them to their pleasant country home in Springfield, Otsego County, N. Y. Harriette received a warm welcome into the family circle, and it was a source of unbounded satisfaction to Mrs. Bronson that the three children would be together.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

DARKENING SHADOWS

MRS. BRONSON remained in her native land nearly a year, recruiting her health and visiting her relatives and friends. But she did not forget the Assam mission, and wherever possible sought to awaken an interest in that field. When the time came to return to her husband and her work abroad, she would not return alone, for her oldest daughter, Mary, had completed her course of study in Philadelphia, and would accompany her. With streaming eyes she again bade farewell to the other dear children and set her face eastward, embarking on the ship John M. Mayo for Calcutta. In a letter sent on shore from the ship is this touching extract:

"My Darling Children: The pilot is just leaving us, and we are rapidly going out to sea. Your mother's heart aches and her tears flow fast as she realizes all that she is leaving behind her. Oh, can I make this sacrifice and sunder the dearest ties of nature? Yes, for Jesus' sake, and the

poor heathen's, and also for your good. I can do it if strength is given me from on high. Once more, farewell. Your deeply afflicted

"MOTHER."

After an uneventful voyage they arrived at Calcutta and were soon on their way up the great river. A letter from Mrs. Bronson to her little daughter, Harriette, thus describes their arrival at their journey's end:

"We reached Nowgong in our native boat late at night on the tenth of May, 1856. It was in the midst of a severe thunderstorm, and first we saw our sweet home by the bright lightning's incessant glare. Oh, how happy I was to enter our own home once more, after having been so long a wanderer! Though it was so late, our faithful boy, Rudram, had lighted up the large hall; so it looked quite cheerful, and we did not heed the storm outside. Your dear papa was overjoyed at having two of his family circle with him again after months of loneliness, and we knelt together in a prayer of thanksgiving and praise. I went first of all to your own little room, and there stood your bed just as you left it. Oh, my Harriette, I felt as if I must see you in that little room! It seemed so empty, and I longed to again clasp my darling one to my bosom. You were my Benja-

min, the last of my little flock left me, and had been such a source of comfort to my poor, lonely heart. A bitter distress came over me as I realized that you were not here; that oceans separate us; and that we should nevermore see our darling in this happy home of her childhood. I tried to give you up even as I have tried before, and to lay you a willing offering upon the altar. Oh, my child, you will probably never know what this separation costs your dear parents! But they try to do it cheerfully and for the sake of Christ, who bade us leave all we hold dear, if necessary, in order to carry his gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. I hope and trust that you also will submit to the painful trial of having to be separated from your parents, and feel you are enduring it for Jesus' sake and for his precious cause.

"The native Christians often speak of you and inquire how you are, and your pet pussy receives special attention on your account, and I give her a saucer of milk with my own hands every evening. Papa and sister Mary send love.

"Your affectionate

"MAMMA."

The year following Mrs. Bronson's return from America clouds began to gather, and rumors

spread abroad of an insurrection against the English government. There was nothing definite, but a general uneasiness prevailed. Previous to the year 1857, a large number of native troops had been employed in India. These soldiers, called Sepoys, consisted of both Mohammedans and Hindus. They were of course fully accoutred, and were officered by Europeans. These Sepoys had been greatly petted and indulged by the government, but instead of being true to its service many of them became arrogant and disloyal at heart. They would have been glad to see the native kings restored to their thrones. They were weary of the British yoke and desired to throw it off. At first this disaffection was kept in such strict secrecy that the foreign residents little dreamed of the storm soon to burst on their defenseless heads. But the spark of rebellion once kindled was soon fanned into a flame, which threatened to destroy everything in its path. Just at this time the English authorities, unfortunately, introduced a new kind of cartridge, which simple circumstance furnished the pretext for an uprising. These cartridges were greased with a kind of fat that was offensive to both classes of soldiers, or Sepoys, and they were obliged to bite off the ends in the process of loading their guns. The Hindu Sepoys would

thereby lose their "caste." They made this a ground of complaint against the English, and insisted that the new kind of cartridge was introduced to injure and finally destroy their sacred institution of caste. Intense dissatisfaction reigned, but before a signal for revolt was given a singular circumstance occurred.

A queer-looking bundle was sent to all the post-offices in India that had native postmasters. Inside these bundles were twelve circular cakes, made of flour and water, and called by the Hindus "chipaties." Each postmaster who received one was expected to prepare twelve more of these mysterious cakes and send them to some one else, until distributed throughout the country. Much curiosity was aroused and many conjectures made as to the hidden meaning of this proceeding, but none of the foreign residents guessed the truth. It was soon only too fatally revealed as the signal that had been agreed upon for a general uprising.

Regiment after regiment of Sepoys rose unexpectedly and cut off the heads of their white officers, and marched by in fearful mockery, with the gory heads impaled upon their bayonets. This terrible outbreak of mutiny against the control of the English was one of the greatest tragedies of history, and caused rivers of blood to roll over India and destruction of property, besides sus-

pension of all missionary efforts for long, weary months, while the shadows of rebellion darkened the fair land.

It was at first thought that as the province of Assam was so far away, in the northeastern part of Hindustan, the insurrection would not extend there. But the mutinous spirit reached Assam also, for a treasonable correspondence had been maintained between the Sepoys there and the mutineers of Bengal and Delhi. A plot was laid for the massacre of every white person in that part of the country, but was fortunately discovered before being put into execution.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

A THRILLING EXPERIENCE

AMONG the native princes whom the mutineers wished to restore to royalty was the ex-king, or rajah, of Assam, who was living in retirement in the northern part of the province. One of the English officers in command, Major Holoroyd, became suspicious of the Sepoys under his charge, and determined to thwart their designs. He sent, secretly, two regiments of troops that were still loyal to the palace of the native king, and he himself, stepping into a small boat, was rowed silently down to a place where officers and soldiers met, surrounded the palace, and surprised the inmates. The ex-king was seized, after a short but vain resistance, and immediately sent under strong guard to Calcutta. It was hoped this decided step would quell the mutiny in Assam. But, alas! it only delayed the outbreak, and another plot was formed for the massacre of all foreigners in the province.

The Bronsons were alone at Nowgong at this

time and were in especial danger, because there were just then no white officers to restrain the Sepoys, whose barracks were across the street in front of the mission bungalow. There was not even an English magistrate to control affairs, as that office was held by an educated Hindu of high rank, who might be as treacherous as the rest. They felt alarmed, and their hearts were full of gloomy apprehensions as to the probable result, but dared not betray it by word or sign, and assumed a composure they were far from feeling. These Sepoys, whose quarters were so near, had always before been respectful, but now there was a startling change in their manner. They became insolent, and told the native Christians that they would ere long cut off their heads and throw them into the river, and their white teachers would also be put to death. A crisis seemed approaching, and they made preparations for a hasty flight if their worst fears should be realized. Resolving to sell their lives as dearly as possible, Mrs. Bronson and Miss Mary Bronson learned how to load and fire a gun, and acquired dexterity in the handling of weapons of defense. Mary Bronson slept with her gun at the head of her bed, and said she would shoot twenty of the cruel wretches before they could kill her!

It was a time of terrible suspense and anxiety.

Attempts were made to frighten them at night; for they often heard strange noises around their dwelling, as if heavy logs were being drawn up and down the front veranda steps. They arranged a plan upon which to act in case the mutineers made their dreaded attack by night. A large basket was kept in readiness in their sleeping-room, to which a stout rope was attached, into which the two women were to step and be lowered to the ground by Mr. Bronson. Then they were to seek shelter in a small outhouse not far from the bungalow, and he was to follow them as quickly as possible after barricading the door.

Day followed day, until the suspense became almost unbearable, when at last the tidings came that the day and hour had been fixed upon, when at the sound of the bugle the Sepoys throughout Assam were to rise and cut the throat of every foreigner. The officials in Upper Assam had full knowledge of the plot, and timely warning had been given. They advised all Europeans to concentrate at Gauhati, the capital of the province, or at least send the women and children there. But this important station was a hundred miles farther down the river, and the risk to be encountered in reaching it was great. Still, the only chance for escape lay in arriving there, and it was decided to make the attempt. At Gauhati they would not

be so unprotected as at Nowgong, and the little band of Europeans there, together with the English officers in command, might be able to keep the Sepoys in check. Arrangements were made for instant departure from their home, and on a dark night, aided by the clouds that obscured the moon so that their flight was unnoticed, they hurriedly and sadly entered the small boat which had been made ready for this emergency. Everything in the bungalow was left to the care of the native Christians, although they were afraid the contents would be destroyed ere they should return.

The journey to Gauhati took three days, and during those never-to-be-forgotten hours the fugitives endured the most torturing suspense. No fresh tidings had reached them, and they knew not whether the station to which they were fleeing remained in the hands of the British. Their hearts sickened with fear as they thought of the gantlet of murderous Sepoys they might have to run. They preferred death to being taken alive; and, indeed, death was preferable to being submitted to the tender mercies of these fiends in human form, whose cruelties were beyond description. As they approached Gauhati they prepared for the worst, and placed Mrs. Bronson, who was ill, in the back part of the boat for greater security; and the guns and ammunition

were placed beside Mary Bronson, so that she might load rapidly, and then she and Mr. Bronson knelt near the mattress upon which the sick woman lay, resolved to defend themselves to the last. There was a bend in the river just before reaching the station, and as they neared this point, oh, how anxiously did those trembling ones look out from their shelter to see if the English flag was still flying from the flagstaff! If not visible, they knew only too well what it portended. As the boat turned the bend they were wrought up to the utmost intensity. Those who know what it is to feel their all at stake, that death may be just before them, will understand the feelings that agitated their beating hearts. Nearer and nearer they drew to the picturesque station, and as they caught sight of the British colors waving proudly over the military encampment, they thanked God and wept for very joy. The hour of darkest danger was over, and they hoped deliverance was near.

They found the Sepoys at Gauhati were still quiet, though it was hourly feared they would rise in mutiny. The little force of Europeans, missionaries and all, went out daily and drilled before them, and did this to show that they were not afraid of them, and would fight to the last extremity. And it was not without its effect, for

this heroic band of thirty white men succeeded in keeping at bay the force of six hundred Sepoys whom they confronted daily, until an armed government steamer was sent to their relief from Calcutta. The refugees from all parts of Assam gladly availed themselves of this means of escape, and under its protection were taken to Calcutta. There the Bronsons soon embarked for America, sincerely thankful for their marvelous deliverance.

The great Sepoy mutiny was never forgotten by them or their friends, who received them as if given back from the dead. It was a cause for gratitude that this terrible insurrection, which resulted in the loss of so much life and property, and threatened the existence of the British government in India, was entirely quelled, and this fair land once more became safe and peaceful.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

AGAIN IN THE HOME LAND

THE fugitives from the dire peril in India were well-nigh exhausted by the strain of terror and anxiety through which they had passed, and it took a long time for them to recover from its effects. The rest of the sea voyage proved beneficial, and after arriving in America they visited among their relatives for a time, and then began housekeeping in Hamilton, N. Y., where the eldest brother of Mr. Bronson resided. This brother and wife had had charge of the little Sophia, their youngest daughter, and she now came back to her parents. Mary, the oldest, was also with them, but the three children at Springfield, N. Y., remained with their adopted mother, Mrs. David Cotes. It seemed delightful to live again in a Christian land, and yet their hearts were with their chosen work in far-away Assam.

They remained here over a year, while Mr. Bronson made frequent visits to the churches to plead the cause of his beloved mission, and ask for

reenforcements to be sent as soon as the English government regained control of the country.

And now occurred an event of great interest in any family—the first marriage. The acquaintance of Mary Bronson with Mr. Cyrus Fisher Tolman, a student in Madison University, had ripened into a mutual attachment which resulted in their becoming husband and wife. Mr. Tolman felt called to the foreign field, and was designated to Assam to labor with Mr. Bronson at Nowgong. After his ordination a quiet home wedding was solemnized at Hamilton, when her father gave this beloved daughter to the one whose helpmeet she so truly became. Tears mingled with congratulations, for soon the bride and her young husband were to sail for India. And although their term of service was shortened by the attacks of jungle fever, which seized Mr. Tolman and finally compelled his return to America, they accomplished much for the cause of missions. They never lost their missionary spirit, whether at home or abroad, and performed noble work for the Master.

After the departure of Mr. and Mrs. Tolman, a call was extended to Mr. Bronson to become pastor of the Baptist church in Springfield, N. Y. As he was not yet strong enough to return to Assam, the call was accepted. This led to their

removal to Springfield, a place ever after dear to both.

They were now near the three children Mrs. Cotes had adopted, and this was a source of great comfort. As they were pursuing their studies under a governess, and their school was not out until Friday afternoon, the little girls took turns in coming to stay with their parents from Friday evening till Monday morning. How Ruth Bronson's heart treasured those hours when her darlings could be with her again, as in their happy childhood days, and again she seemed to listen to the gay voices and merry laughter under the old tree near the mission bungalow. All too soon sped this year of pleasant pastoral service, and with renewed health came the summons to return to the work across the sea, where laborers were so few. Again they tore themselves away from the clinging arms of their children and friends, and prepared for the return voyage, embarking on the ship R. B. Forbes, bound for Calcutta.

There were quite a number of missionaries on board this vessel, and they were pained by the profanity prevalent among the officers and crew. They determined to make an effort religiously for these men, and requested permission of the captain to hold midweek services besides the

regular Sabbath service. Although himself an unbeliever, he consented, and the missionaries began a series of gospel meetings. At first the ones for whose salvation they were praying paid no attention, and they worshiped alone; but gradually the officers and sailors who were not on duty dropped into the services and listened to the gospel message. They grew interested and came again. Under the power of the Holy Spirit they became deeply convicted of sin and implored divine forgiveness and mercy. A revival followed which resulted in the conversion of all the officers and sailors except one. It seemed a Pentecostal outpouring, and the change on board the vessel was truly marvelous. Mrs. Bronson wrote to a friend at home:

"Instead of the oaths and constant profanity we heard at the beginning of our voyage, we now hear the voice of prayer and praise, and floating up the open hatchway comes the sound of singing as little groups are holding prayer meetings. These once indifferent and profane men are truly transformed by the power of Christ, and our hearts are full of gratitude to God for so signally answering our prayers."

An echo from this great awakening on board the R. B. Forbes was wafted down the years, and

listened to at a meeting of the Baptist Young People's Union at Danvers, Mass. The pastor of the Baptist church there reported a very interesting occurrence when Dr. Warren F. Porter, a valued member, arose in the audience and said:

"Our lesson to-night, speaking of heaven, says: 'There shall be no more sea,' as if the sea were not a blessing. But the sea was a blessing to me. It did not seem to be a blessing for a number of years. My mother grieved over every voyage that I made, and several times I promised her not to ship again. I have been a captain in the merchant marine, but before that came the voyage when I shipped as mate on the R. B. Forbes, in 1858, and took out a company of missionaries. I did not believe in missionaries, but I soon found that they were very decent persons. I discovered, also, that they had come aboard the ship with the deliberate purpose of winning as many of the ship's men to Christ as God would permit. And I bless God that nearly every one on the ship was converted, from the captain down. Men that had never heard the gospel before, and from whose lips rolled blasphemies, were truly born again, and their lives wonderfully changed. Under God, Mrs. Miles Bronson was the means of my conversion, as she talked and prayed with

me and showed so great an interest in my welfare. Oh, what a different man I became! And how I thanked God for my salvation; and how I have loved missionaries ever since! Do you wonder that I love the sea when I think what a different man I am on account of what I found at sea? And I must confess to a little shade of disappointment when I read about heaven, 'There shall be no more sea.'

. . . . . .

"And one thing more. As I sailed among those Eastern ports I used to think that the natives were but animals, or like brute beasts. But I learned after Christ took me for one of his, that they too were men and women. I have seen some of the noblest Christian characters among these poor people of the East. And ever afterward I have looked upon these pagan men and women as those who only needed the gospel of Christ, and then they would be heirs of heaven as much as any white men. When, later, in Liverpool, I was handed a tract one day by a stranger, entitled, 'The Conversion of the Mate of the R. B. Forbes,' I was surprised and glad to learn that others had been converted through reading this tract. How far-reaching was the work of these consecrated missionaries on board that vessel!"

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE BELOVED INDIAN HOME

THE little party of missionaries ever carried tender memories of the days spent on the R. B. Forbes, after it had been transformed into a floating Bethel. Mr. Bronson loved to tell the story of one hardened old sailor whom he found gazing out over the water with a look of deep trouble on his face. It was evident the poor man was under conviction, for as Mr. Bronson inquired the cause of his grief, he exclaimed, "My sins! My sins! The wrong things I did in Calcutta, in London, in Rio de Janeiro, in Havre, Canton, and Liverpool, all stare me in the face. I fear my soul must be lost. Can God forgive so great a sinner?" Just then floated up the companionway, from a meeting that was being held below, these words of the sweet old song:

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

"I see it! I see it!" cried the sailor. "His blood can wash it all away. Lord, I believe!" and he became a rejoicing convert. The presence of the Spirit of God was so manifest on board the vessel that they felt they had been in heavenly places.

On their arrival in Assam they joined their son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Tolman, but ere long were deprived of the great pleasure of their society and assistance by the failure of Mr. Tolman's health through severe attacks of jungle fever, compelling him to return to America in haste in order to save his life. He had been most successful in his short term of service, especially among a hill tribe called Mikirs, and his enforced departure and that of his wife was a great loss to the mission. Mrs. Tolman followed him later with their two little children.

Mrs. Bronson was most happy to be home once more in the spot she loved so well in this far Eastern land. In a letter written after her return, she said:

"Oh, this delightful November weather! It is as nearly perfect as weather can be. The only drawback is now and then a foggy morning, which, however, is quite made up by the exceeding beauty of the sky as the fog melts away before the

brilliance of the sun. I really think there is no more lovely spot on earth than dear, quiet Nowgong. We often say that were our children here we should desire no other home this side of Canaan. We are happy in our work, also, and our hearts have grown to the hearts of our people as we once never dreamed they could. We wish to stay and labor among them as long as our strength permits, and prefer the life of a foreign missionary to any other."

Again she wrote, describing the duties of their busy Sabbath:

"It is Sabbath morning, my dear ones, and as calm and beautiful almost as a Sabbath morning in a Christian land. I arose early and enjoyed my season of retirement, and was enabled to cast all my burdens of anxiety for my dear children on the Lord, and felt a sweet confidence that he would take care of them. Then I sat on the front veranda, overlooking the shrubbery and flower garden, and committed to memory a piece of sacred poetry. I began to learn sacred hymns in childhood, and find it convenient to be able to sing without the aid of a book at family prayers and at church. Since the coming of the dear Scotts, as our associates, we sing a great deal, as

they too are musical. Dear papa's health is so much better than when he returned; his voice is strong once more for singing, and we all enjoy it. It is now time for family worship, which it devolves upon me to conduct, as your papa is engaged in his study at this hour. The pupils of our normal class always attend, and as many of our native Christians as can leave home so early. It is an interesting season and instructive to the lambs of our flock.

"We have just breakfasted at 10 a. m., and during the short interval before our eleven o'clock worship at the chapel I have been talking to my far-distant children. It is now time to prepare for going to church. At 2 p. m. I conducted the Sunday-school as usual; then, after a little rest, there was another meeting for conference and prayer with the native Christians, which we trust is a foretaste of better things to come.

"The busy day is over and it is now evening. The sun has set amid clouds of gold and crimson, and the moon, now nearly full, promises one of those lovely evenings which cannot be surpassed if, indeed equaled, in any land. We are now going to our English worship at the chapel; the Assamese service being held in the forenoon. Later: We have just returned home weary, but refreshed in spirit. Dear papa preached two ex-

cellent sermons to-day—both forenoon and evening. To-night a stranger present followed us home desiring to know more of the true religion. Thus the holy hours of another Sabbath have passed and their account is sealed up in heaven. We feel that it is blessed to labor for souls here, and if I only knew that all was

Preaching in the Bazaar, Nowgong

well with my dear children I would be perfectly content. But I must leave them in the arms of Infinite Love. They are safe there.

"Good night, my darlings. Your loving

"MAMMA."

Another feature of Mrs. Bronson's work was taking charge of some of the Assamese school-

girls. There were a number in whom she took a great interest, and among them two by the names of Junaki and Humptira. She thus spoke of Humptira, whom she called her Aśsamese

A Hindu Woman

daughter: "She is a very nice girl and truly pious, we think. Her father used to be our "dhebi," or washerman, and her mother who lives in our compound gave the daughter to us. When quite small she gave me much trouble and anxiety, being deceitful and peevish, and I was

nearly discouraged about her. But she gradually improved, and last summer gave her heart to the Saviour, and since then has been most exemplary. She is a great comfort to me, especially since my other good girl, Junaki, left me last December for her husband's home. I am fond of Humptira and glad she has made so nice a girl."

But besides these extracts from her letters, we learn of Mrs. Bronson's work abroad from stories she told her children and which they have treasured in memory.

One day when seated on the veranda a strange-looking figure approached her, and asked imploringly, "Can you tell me if there is a beautiful heaven?" The questioner was a lad about sixteen years of age, and seemed to have come a long distance, as his feet were bruised and bleeding, his clothing tattered, and he himself looked wild-eyed and gaunt, as if he had suffered hunger and exposure. Startled by his sudden appearance and abrupt question, the missionary's wife called her husband, and together they learned that their strange visitor had come to Nowgong from the Garo hills, a hundred miles away. Seeing that he was exhausted they bade him talk no more, and gave him food and a place to sleep in for the night. The next morning he awoke refreshed and better able to explain his reason for

traveling so far to see them. His home was in a village in the Garo hills, and there he heard a man who had been down to the plains tell of a new religion, brought from over the water, which promised to them a beautiful heaven to enjoy after this life was ended. A strong desire arose in his heart to find out what this new teaching meant, for it seemed so much better than to worship the mountain spirits of which he stood in dread. Therefore, he had left his village and started down the mountainside in quest of the white teachers. But the journey was long and the path difficult, and often he was pinched with hunger, having only nuts and roots and berries that grew along the wayside to subsist upon. At night he climbed into trees as a protection from the wild beasts he heard prowling below. His feet were cut by the sharp rocks and stones and became sore and swollen, and frequently he was obliged to climb and descend precipices. Still he persevered in spite of all obstacles until he reached the mission station safely.

Deeply touched by this narration, the missionary and his wife explained to this earnest seeker after truth the way of salvation, by acceptance of which only could the "beautiful heaven" be won. The lad remained and became a member of the mission school, eagerly receiving instruc-

tion. They soon had the joy of baptizing him, and later he was sent back as a bearer of the glad tidings to his own people. Not many have undertaken so long and perilous a journey to as-

Matron and Teacher, Nowgong

certain the way to reach heaven, and if he has now passed within its portals and entered upon those joys and glories beyond the power of language to describe, his heart must swell with gratitude to her who first told him of Christ, the Way.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

SUNRISE ON THE GARO HILLS

IF there had been a watchtower on the mountain ranges encircling Assam, the watchman could have seen about this time a break in the dense shadows of spiritual night that prevailed, and over a portion of the hills a glimmer as of coming dawn. For over the wildest of the tribes inhabiting this region the Sun of Righteousness was rising, the brightness of whose glory would drive away the mists of ignorance and superstition that had enshrouded them for ages. And so the morning came to this people sitting in darkness "and they saw a great light."

The English government had hitherto been unable to subdue the wild tribes of Garos. They were fierce and untamable, and had received the name of head-hunters because they sometimes swept suddenly down upon the plains, and cutting off the heads of their victims would return to their rocky fastnesses with their bloody trophies.

At last the government established a school at

the foot of the hills, at a place called Goalpara, with the purpose of educating a few young men and sending them back to civilize their tribe. Twelve youths were found who desired to attend, and among these were two named Omed and Rhamkhe, who were uncle and nephew, and afterward the first two converts from the tribe. Rhamkhe was eager to enter the school at once, being of a bright mind, but his parents refused permission until he fell from a tree and broke his arm. Being, therefore, but of little value in their rude mode of farming, he was allowed to go to school. With enlightenment came a conviction that there must be one great God over all. He searched for him and thought he had found him in one of the Hindu deities of whom he read. But at last a little tract, left by a touring missionary from Bengal, revealed to him the true God. After a few years the Garo school was discontinued and proved that education without the accompaniment of Christianity must be a failure. Omed and Rhamkhe were unwilling to return to their benighted countrymen and settled among the people of the plains, where they entered the police service. They were not in a good environment morally, and their spiritual longings were quenched. But years later, in Gauhati, the old longing returned and they sought instruction once

more. There was a native evangelist there, Kandura by name, who had rare power in preaching and explaining the gospel. They came to him and he showed them the way to eternal life. They soon accepted Christ and were baptized by Doctor Bronson in 1863. They were now ready to go back to their own people, and to attempt to lift them from their savagery to the acceptance of Christianity and its blessings. They resigned their government positions and, under the supervision of Doctor Bronson, returned to the Garo hills, Omed as an evangelist and Rhamkhe as a Christian school-teacher. At first they lived in a tent at the foot of the hills, as it was not safe for them to penetrate into the interior, and there received all who came to them for instruction. So faithful were their labors, and so great their success, that after four years Doctor Bronson was called to baptize forty-seven converts and to organize the first Garo church.

At a later period the native preacher, Kandura, visited the Garo hills in company with Messrs. Stoddard and Comfort, and saw with his own eyes the results of Omed and Rhamkhe's labors. And his soul was filled with wonder at this great work among the Garos. After about one hundred and fifty Christians had given him a hearty welcome by a shake of the hand, he turned to the

two, who under God had accomplished this marvel, and said: "Brethren, where am I? Whom do I see and hear around me? When you two first called on me in Gauhati, only a few years ago, to inquire about this Christian religion, did I believe I would live to see so great a fire of truth

Garo Earrings—One Ear

kindled in this dark land? No; never! But it is of God. On! my brothers, with the torch of truth, and you shall soon see all the Garo land in a blaze!"

The delighted Kandura also was surprised at the village of Rajasimola—the Jerusalem of the Garo mission. When the gospel light began to dawn upon this people there was no place of

safety in any heathen village for those who embraced it. Hence, a city of refuge was built, and many fled hither from places of threatened danger until there was room for no more. And the blessing of God had been upon them; for, in cattle, rice, and clothing they were far better off than previous to their flight several years before. Most of the teachers and preachers of the mission have come from families that reside in this Christian village.

Mr. Bronson was the pioneer missionary in this new field. After repeated solicitations to survey the ground he spent three years among the hills. Under date of April 17, 1867, he gave an account of what he had seen and heard, as follows:

"I got into Goalpara last evening from my first tour among the Garos, and am resting at my friend Captain Campbell's for one day, awaiting a steamer to-morrow, when I shall go to Gauhati to consult with our missionaries there as to what we had better do with the glorious opportunity now opening before us. During my whole missionary life I have never seen anything so wonderful as the work now going on among the tribe of Garos. Those first two Garo converts, Omed and Rhamkhe, have labored faithfully and quietly on, amid ridicule, reproach, and

even threats of personal violence, and proved themselves to be the trustworthy men I believed them to be when I baptized them at Gauhati.

"On Friday, the twelfth, furnished with two elephants by the kindness of Captain Campbell, I set out on my tour. I took with me only one native preacher and a Christian boy to help care for my wants on the way. Reached Damra about 5 p. m., where Rhamkhe is stationed and found him well, and with a school of fifteen nice boys. Spent the evening in examining them in their studies and find Rhamkhe has taught them well. At this station Rhamkhe has regular Sabbath services at which many go and come, and Christian light is being daily disseminated.

"The next morning, the thirteenth, we set out for Omed's village, called Raj Simda, a new village at the foot of the hills, established by Omed. It is a lovely spot, with a fine stream of water close at hand and plenty of land suitable for cultivation. A crowd was waiting to receive us. There are about forty houses in the village, all clean and orderly. The largest and best house, recently built by themselves, is used for Christian worship, which every Sabbath is crowded with hearers. Although I had brought a tent I never used it, as a small house, very clean, was placed at my disposal. As soon as possible I

went to the chapel, which I found crowded with people anxious to hear from me the word of God. I spoke to them in Assamese, which was understood by some, the three assistants interpreting the same to the hill people who only understood the Garo language. It was deeply affecting to me to see their fixed attention and deep interest as I spoke to them of Christ and his love to poor lost sinners, and that he died even for poor, ignorant Garos. Oh, it is easy work to preach Christ under such circumstances! Omed has made the story of the cross the burden of his message to his countrymen, and their hearts have begun to melt under its mighty power. At last I put the question, 'How many of you love this Saviour and, abandoning all your heathen practices, will worship him alone?' Twenty-six, all residents of this village, arose. I explained to them what it might cost them to become Christians—ridicule, reproach, opposition, and perhaps even death. They replied, 'Yes, we have thought it all over; we expect opposition, but we have decided.' . . The native evangelists testified to their changed conduct, and they were received after examination as candidates for Christian baptism. It was late before I could retire for a little rest, and then I left them still assembled."

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE STORY OF THE MOUNTAIN TOUR

On the mountains let me labor,
In the desert let me tell,
How he died, the blessed Saviour,
To redeem a world from hell.

DID this echo from the farewell service held years ago in the church at Whitesboro, N. Y., float over the wide ocean to the ears of Miles Bronson as he ascended these rugged hillsides during this memorable tour among the Garo mountains? His wishes were being fulfilled, and of his progress through this wild region might be said, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth."

In his diary we find these expressions concerning this journey:

"Happy days! So blessed to work thus for Jesus. Sunday all the time! Special strength

given. I could be nothing else but a missionary."

Resuming the account of his three days' tour, he wrote:

"The Sabbath, the fourteenth, was a day of days long to be remembered. We had early morning worship, also at ten o'clock, after which we repaired to the beautiful mountain stream, dammed up for the purpose, where I baptized in the name of the sacred Trinity twenty-six Garo converts, men and women. A crowd of wild, savage-looking people stood on the bank, but all were as quiet and respectful as if used to such scenes. Among this first ingathering of the wild Garos into the fold of Christ were some who a short time before were angry opposers. The case of one of them affected me much. He had learned to read and write in the government school at Goalpara, and also to speak Assamese very well. He was one of the first to leave off opposition and join Omed, since which he has been a right-hand man. For some time he has been unable to walk from a diseased foot. He said to me with much feeling, 'I am Christ's disciple, but I cannot walk. How can I be baptized?' Seeing his earnest wish, I told Omed to have him brought to me in the water. You should have seen his joy and delight, and after

his baptism he said: 'My heart burns with desire to go and tell my people of the mountains of this religion. Only let my foot get well and I shall go.'

"Sabbath evening the house was again

Christian Garo Women

crowded. If the baptismal scene of the morning had been impressive, the services of the evening in organizing the first Garo church and ordaining its native pastor were indeed memorable. After preaching I formed the little band of disciples into a church, and thanked the Lord that so

great a privilege was granted me. I explained to them that this was done in the days of the apostles, and one of their number must be appointed as pastor. Whom would they choose for pastor and preacher, to baptize, bury their dead, and perform their marriages according to the Christian custom? They chose Omed, from whose lips they had received the gospel. Therefore, I laid hands upon him in the presence of them all, and told him to range the hills, preach, baptize, do the work of a Christian pastor, and be 'faithful unto death!' Now this may be very unepiscopal, but I feel this is no time to stand on formalities in the work of God. The Garos have been too long neglected, and they are just opening their eyes to see and feel this. A good, faithful, cautious native like Omed can do more among them than a dozen new missionaries just now. I cannot stay here, and there are twenty other Garos desiring baptism away from this village at present. It is necessary to have some one of their number empowered to act as pastor and guide, and good for them to feel some responsibility in the outset. My work shall be to bring the perishing to Christ, and to make the native churches independent of foreign teachers as fast as possible. It is in this way only that Christianity will take root and grow in this country. I

am content to follow the example of Christ and his apostles as recorded in the New Testament.

"Monday, the fifteenth, I gave orders to start early for Damra on the return trip. When I went into the chapel, Omed told me that ten more in the village were unwilling I should leave without numbering them among Christ's disciples. They said with emotion, 'Why cannot we profess Christ by baptism as well as the others?' I saw I had more work to do, so I called in the church and received these ten. I baptized alternately with Omed, thus introducing him at once into the work for which he had been set apart. He used the baptismal formula in Garo, while I used the Assamese. This showed the Garos that baptism, whether by his hand or mine, was the same. Thus in one village is now a church of forty professed Christians including the native assistants, and as they have been a year or more in deciding I feel that they will stand the test of opposition.

"And now with the acceptance of Christianity came as a natural result a desire to learn. I told them to consult together and tell me whether they wanted a school in their village, and how many would send children if I provided a teacher. After a short conference a class of seventeen Garos, bright, promising young men, stood before me; besides a class of thirteen small boys,

from five to ten years of age, and a class of Garo girls, from five to thirteen years of age.

"'Do you want your girls taught?' I inquired.

"'Yes, as well as the boys.'

Two Native Missionaries

"So I appointed Tokera, one of the newly baptized, who is a good scholar, to be their teacher, I am to give him a salary of ten rupees a month.

"Thus is our second Garo school formed at the request of the people. Here is the working

out of my idea of the true missionary policy. When possible, work first through faithful native laborers. Bring them under the power of the gospel, and they will begin themselves to call for missionaries, books, and teachers. There is a constant communication between these Christians and the mountaineers, and the gospel will work its way. And now that God has so unexpectedly brought me into this new field, I wish to acknowledge his hand and move at his bidding. When I knew of no one who was raising his finger to help the Garos, God put it into the hearts of Omed and Rhamkhe to come and beg to be sent to teach their countrymen. I saw their earnestness. I saw God's hand in it, and although I had no funds I dared not say no. I sent them.

"We have now four native assistants to support and two schools for which books must be supplied. Other schools will soon follow. I want help. A few hundred rupees would enable me to go on with the work, and I am praying that God will send the needed help, and I believe it will come and that I shall soon have a co-laborer expressly for the Garos."

As if in answer to the prayers and faith of this devoted servant of God, funds were forthcoming to meet this unexpected emergency, and over five

hundred dollars, or one thousand one hundred and nineteen rupees, was sent in from various sources, and mostly by the English residents of Goalpara. A portion of this was at once invested in land and buildings at that place for a mission family. Doctor Bronson returned to Gauhati, and it was there decided that at the close of the rainy season Mr. Stoddard should repair to Goalpara with his family and undertake the cultivation of this new field.

Accordingly, on the first of October of that year, he and his wife took up their abode in the mission house just purchased, situated on a beautiful hill overlooking the great river, the most eligible site in Goalpara.

The plans thus formed by the brethren on the banks of the Brahmaputra were approved and sanctioned by the Executive Committee as soon as known at the missionary rooms in Boston, and the new Garo mission was placed on a permanent basis. And their expectations have been fulfilled in the success which has followed the introduction of Christianity into this wild region. Soon after Mr. Stoddard's arrival, he wrote:

"Reports come in from many villages of men and women who are seeking Jesus. Colonel Haughton, who was here recently to meet the

Garo chiefs who are now friendly to the government, and is the English commissioner, gave me a pleasant interview. There were thirty or forty chiefs assembled, and all professed their willingness to aid him in bringing the remaining chiefs into friendly relationship. This officer has had wide experience and marked success with many savage tribes, and he told me of his determination next cold season to march entirely through the Garo hills. He believes he can do this by that time without fear of molestation. He is a warm friend of missions, and contributes liberally to them, and stands ready to aid in any effort for the good of this too-long neglected and abused people."

Only a few years later, in 1874, Rev. Mr. Keith, who had joined Mr. Stoddard at Goalpara, made a trip through the Garo hills and visited places where never before had been a missionary. He was well received, and expressed his belief that among this rude people the gospel is destined to achieve triumphs similar to those seen in the Scottish Highlands and in the mountains of Switzerland, and that on these rugged hilltops thousands upon thousands would sing in a glad, full chorus the praises of redeeming love.

To be used of God as the pioneer in such a

work of grace, and be the first to witness and send word of this marvelous outpouring of the Spirit's power upon a benighted people, was a cause for great joy and gratitude to Miles Bronson. To be permitted to erect the standard of the cross where hitherto Satan only had had sway, made him

A Christian Garo Family

willing to do and suffer all things to advance the cause of his blessed Master. Well might he look back in memory to that parting scene at the church in Whitesboro, N. Y., and sing again the words he had sung there alone while others were weeping:

"Yes, I hasten from you gladly,
. . . . . .
Far in heathen lands to dwell."

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE ASSAMESE DICTIONARY

FOR some time previous to his tour among the Garo hills, Doctor Bronson had been hard at work at the Assamese and English dictionary which he had undertaken to prepare. This work has proved of great value in the study of the language, and is a lasting monument to his memory. The year 1867 saw the final revision of the manuscript over which four years of labor had been expended. In a letter written at this time to her daughter Harriette, Mrs. Bronson said:

"Could you visit your old home to-day you would find your room occupied by papa as a study, where he is working hard all day on the dictionary. You would see in the center a long table, covered with green baize, on which are piled at long intervals large books and writing materials, in orderly confusion. You would see papa sitting at one side of the table, and on the other side three dusky pundits, assisting him in his slow work. You would see mamma's rattan

work-basket standing close by papa's chair, where I sit near, ready to render him any assistance in my power—such as looking up references, synonyms, and definitions. I cannot give my time as fully to assisting papa as I did in Sibsagor, where I had no household cares to interrupt. We went there for a while to take charge during the absence of Mr. Brown. Here I have school duties, housekeeping cares, and a thousand little things to attend to. I have aided him in the revision of the manuscript, which is now about ready for the press."

In his report for the year 1867, Doctor Bronson stated:

"I am very thankful to have been able to finish my four years' task on the Assamese and English dictionary. The normal school in Nowgong has flourished under my supervision, and pupils have been in attendance from many parts of the country—Nagas, Mikirs, and Garos, all studying together. I feel much good will result to their tribes from the instructions given to these promising young people. I always regretted the closing of the Nowgong orphan institution, and felt it was a mistake since so many of our most valued native helpers came from this pioneer training school. Kandura, the faithful native pastor at

Gauhati, was trained for usefulness at this school. In some measure the normal school has supplied its place. The preaching in the bazaars has attracted large multitudes who seemed to desire to hear of Christ, and I feel that the progress of the work at Nowgong during the past year has been satisfactory."

But Doctor Bronson's health began to fail under this strain of work, and a season of rest and a return to his native land seemed imperative if he would labor longer. Their departure was hastened by sad tidings from America. A letter from Mrs. Cotes, of Springfield, N. Y., requested them to return if possible, as one of the dear daughters committed to her care was in a critical condition and the result as yet uncertain. Therefore, that autumn, they again turned their faces homeward, unaware that the wife and mother would never return to her beloved Indian home. Life's sunset slope lay before her, but the path shadowed by suffering which she was to tread was illumined by glorious tints reflected from the city yet unseen, where gates of pearl stood open awaiting the weary pilgrim, and the Master's voice calling, "Enter thou into my joy."

The sea voyage did much toward restoring the

impaired health of Doctor Bronson, and Mrs. Bronson seemed remarkably well. But an unfortunate occurrence befell her, which made her helpless for long weary weeks. While lying upon the sofa in the cabin one day a sudden lurch of the ship threw her violently upon the floor, breaking her hip bone and inflicting other injuries. The poor sufferer was carried to her berth, and the rest of the voyage was passed in agony. The lurching of the vessel would undo all the work of bandaging and placing the limb, so that no permanent relief could be obtained before reaching New York. Once there the best medical aid was procured, so that in a short time she was able to be taken to her children and friends at Springfield, N. Y. She rapidly improved after a few weeks' rest in this beloved spot, and hopes were cherished of her complete recovery from the accident. But her nervous system had been so shattered by the shock she never regained her former strength, and a slow wasting disease took possession of her frame. It was decided finally that the invalid and her husband would spend the fall and winter in Chicago, at the home of their eldest daughter, Mrs. Tolman. The mother's heart, for many years repressed in its longings, cried out to have all her children about her once more, so Mrs. Cotes was asked to permit the three daugh-

ters she had adopted to accompany them to Chicago, that there might be a family reunion for the first time in twenty years. She generously consented, and preparations were made for departure.

One bright morning in the early summer, when the eastern sky was changing from opal to crimson, and the birds were filling the air with melody, a parting prayer service was held in the dear Springfield home, for those about to leave and those who were to remain. Trembling voices joined in the hymn, "Blest Be the Tie That Binds," and sang hopefully the words:

"When we asunder part,
It gives us inward pain;
But we shall still be joined in heart,
And hope to meet again."

But, alas, though they knew it not, the dear missionary mother and the adopted mother were destined never to meet again on this side of Jordan, and clasped hands for the last time on earth.

The journey to Chicago was made with as little discomfort as possible to the invalid mother. It was an inexpressible pleasure to have the family reunited under the roof of her daughter Mary, and she wept for joy to see the children from whom she had so long been parted gather around

her as of old in the home at Nowgong. Sophia, the youngest daughter, who had recently been graduated from the Monticello Seminary, came to join the group, making the family circle complete. But their joy was tempered with sorrow as they saw the beloved mother slowly but surely fading away. It was pitiful to see her look around upon these whom she had given up when little children, and now beheld grown to womanhood without her loving watchcare, and to hear her say, "My life has been one long hunger for my children. God helped me or I should have died long ago."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE CORONATION OF RUTH BRONSON

THE winter that followed the reunion at Chicago was in many respects a sad and anxious one. The gradual decline in health of the beloved mother was sorrowful indeed to witness. Though she recovered from the injury received on the ship sufficiently to walk again without the aid of crutches, her nerves were shattered, and she suffered much in both body and mind as the result. Kind friends in the country, a short distance from the city, invited her to come and try the benefit of a change of air and scene. She went to them for a few weeks and seemed to improve, but the relentless disease still pursued her and she began again to fail. She made heroic efforts to get better, saying to her children, "I must get well, for your dear papa needs me so much."

By spring she had become so enfeebled it was thought best to remove her to her old home in Madison village, N. Y., where she could secure more quiet; and the family circle gathered under

Mrs. Tolman's roof began to break up. The youngest daughter, Sophia, was married to Rev. John M. Titterington, and went to her new home at Edgington, Ill. Next followed the departure of Eliza and Harriette for their adopted home in Springfield, N. Y., to prepare for the approaching marriage of the latter to Rev. William Campbell Gunn, then pastor of the Baptist church at Springfield. Doctor and Mrs. Bronson, accompanied by their daughter Maria, also left for the old home in Madison a few days later, so Mrs. Tolman was once more alone with her own family. The invalid bore well the journey, and seemed to revive under the repose and influences of the old familiar scenes. She was not able to attend her daughter Harriette's wedding, which occurred a month later, June 29, 1869, but insisted that her husband should go and marry this beloved child to the man of her choice. He acceded to her wish, and left her for as short a time as possible.

Meantime, all that love could suggest was done to prolong the precious life. She herself felt hopeful that she would recover and return to her work in Assam, and had her outfit partly prepared, and gave directions about her trunks, if they should sail early in September. But, alas, those who watched and loved her noted the fail-

ure in strength from day to day, and knew that her life-powers must soon succumb to the inroads of the disease. As a last resort she was taken to the water cure at Elmira, N. Y., and placed under the treatment there. Her daughter Mary came from Chicago to care for her, together with Maria, and devotedly they nursed the waning spark of life in that beloved and heroic mother.

But suddenly at last came the summons. "God's finger touched her and she slept!" Her crown had been prepared, sparkling with many gems, and shining ones bore her above, where many ransomed souls whom she had rescued from the darkness of heathenism waited to welcome her; and glad were the greetings in the heavenly city. Her last message to her husband was, "Hasten back to our loved work. If permitted, I will be thy guardian angel and await thee at the pearly gate."

In a letter written by Doctor Bronson to his daughter Harriette may be found an account of this sorrowful time:

"Madison, N. Y., October 4.

"Dear Harriette and William:

"Our dear sufferer, the poor tempest-tossed and at times almost wrecked one, has entered into

rest. Last Thursday evening at seven o'clock, clasped in my arms and with dear Mary and Maria close beside her, she fell sweetly asleep in Jesus without a struggle or a groan. The disease had steadily followed her like an inexorable foe. It caused at times such nervous depression that her mind became clouded and she would look hopelessly upon everything. Satan, ever seeking to annoy those he cannot destroy, would suggest that she had been insincere, and that the costly sacrifices she had made for Christ and the heathen were prompted by wrong motives and selfish desires, and that God did not regard her prayers. At such times nothing could comfort her; and oh! with what agony of soul did she wrestle in prayer until the tempter fled and she gained the victory. Instead of the torturing doubts which had brought distress, sweet peace and a blessed calmness prevailed. Your now sainted mother used to call your names almost every day, often wishing she could see you once more, and at last requesting us to try to take her to Chicago, where all her children might again gather around her. Of course this was impossible in her feeble condition.

"The funeral services were held yesterday at the Baptist church, and were most impressive. Our long-time friend, Doctor Harvey, preached

from the words, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' and I was glad to pay my humble tribute to her worth and usefulness by preparing a sketch of her life, which was read at the funeral services.

"Dear children, God is sustaining me most mercifully, but I feel I must lean on his arm every moment or sink. I shall miss dear mamma everywhere, but I am comforted by the thought that all was done for her that was possible, and now, according to her request, she sleeps in her native village beside her loved father and mother. It has been a great comfort that two daughters could be with her to the last, and we know you were with us in spirit and deep sympathy. After a little rest and time to arrange my plans I must be getting ready to return to my lifework in Assam. I shall come to see you by and by. With much love, your deeply bereaved father,

"Miles Bronson."

So he gave his beloved sleep, and after a strenuous and self-sacrificing life, amid the scenes of her childhood, a quiet resting-place.

A neat slab of Italian marble, erected by her husband, marks the spot where, beside her kindred, was laid all that was mortal of Ruth Bronson. It bears this inscription:

RUTH MONTAGUE LUCAS,

WIFE OF REV. MILES BRONSON, D. D.

Born August 13, 1813. Died September 30, 1869.

FOR THIRTY-THREE YEARS
MISSIONARY TO ASSAM, INDIA.

"There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, or lands for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time and in the world to come,

"Life Everlasting."

These words often have brought tears to the eyes of those who knew her life-story, and recall her heroic sundering of earth's dearest ties in obeying the call to service afar. But the nights of weeping are ended, for God has wiped away all tears from her eyes and she rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE LONELY RETURN

They have but left our weary ways
To live in memory here—in heaven, by prayer and praise.

THE days that followed were long and sorrowful to the bereaved husband. The only comfort left him was to take up again the lifework of himself and his beloved Ruth, and it was decided that he should leave for Assam that autumn. As Lizzie Bronson was soon to be married to Rev. Albert Robinson, Maria would be the only unmarried daughter remaining, and she determined to accompany her father and enter upon missionary labor. It was arranged for him to visit the churches before his departure, presenting the condition and needs of the Assam mission, and he made a tour of some of the larger cities between St. Louis and Boston.

A most gratifying tribute of respect and sympathy was given him in the former city, through the thoughtfulness of Mr. B. F. Jacobs. It was

proposed at that meeting that funds be raised to send these two by the overland route to India, as being more comfortable and expeditious. Before this time all missionaries to India had been sent by the old route on sailing vessels. Through Mr. Jacobs almost the entire amount needed for the extra expense was raised willingly, and they could now reach Assam three months earlier. This deed of kindness was greatly appreciated by the now veteran missionary and his daughter, for it added greatly to the pleasure of their journey.

After farewell visits to friends and children, in Chicago and other places, they arrived at New York where a most touching farewell service was held. There had also been one in Chicago, where the leave-taking had wrung many hearts. The following hymn had been written for the occasion, and was sung with much feeling:

"Go, feed my sheep. Behold a call
From Assam's distant land,
Where sheep without a shepherd stray,
A feeble, stricken band.

"Return, loved teacher, be our guide.
He hears the earnest plea;
Again he girds the armor on
For toil beyond the sea.

"He leaves with kindred hearts a grave
Where his beloved sleeps,
God's precious grace his heart sustains
In sorrow's darkest deeps.

"In distant lands a daughter's love
His lonely path will cheer;
Beyond he sees, by pearly gates,
Heaven's beacon shining clear.

"Loved father, sister, fare ye well,
Our tears forbid our speech;
May Christ's dear love, immortal,
strong,
Go with and bless you each."

December 15, 1869, they sailed in the steamship Nevada from New York, accompanied by Doctor and Mrs. Cross of Burma, en route for Assam. This journey was in striking contrast to the usual tedium of ocean travel and made a trip never to be forgotten. How thoroughly it was enjoyed by the travelers Maria's journals show. Their first stop was in Liverpool, the next in London, where they remained for several weeks. Then crossing the English Channel they landed at Calais, and the next day went to Paris. The week's stay in the brilliant French capital

was most enjoyable, and they met some American friends who bade them welcome.

They next crossed France by rail and reached Marseilles January 22, going directly to the steamer Poonah, which was to convey them over the Mediterranean. For several days they experienced very rough weather, but a smoother sea soon brought relief, and the weary passengers began again to enjoy the journey and were much on deck. Passing the island of Sicily they saw Mount Etna and also Stromboli in the distance. The shores of Italy were a glorious sight with orange trees covered with fruit and luxuriant foliage. While passing through the straits a rainbow arched the waters, lasting several moments, and this bow of promise seemed like a token that God was with them and would bring them safely to their journey's end.

The next stop was in Alexandria, where their first sight of the Egyptians made them realize they had left an enlightened country. These natives quarreled over their baggage and finally seized it, and were only made to relinquish it by commands of the ship's officers. At this place they first saw the wonders of ancient Egypt, and visited Pompey's pillar and other points of interest. Proceeding by rail to Cairo, they obtained glimpses of the country and enjoyed the view of

the famous river Nile. Arriving at Cairo they spent a short time in sightseeing. They went to the Heliopolis, or Temple of the Sun, also to the pyramids, and gazed with awe upon the stately grandeur of the Sphinx. That colossal face of stone standing forth amid the desert sands for so many centuries threw over them a charm, or spell, which it possesses for every beholder. They marveled at the intellect which so long ago conceived the idea of the Sphinx and had the power to fashion it in stone, and in a manner that has survived the wear of the ages. It had grasped the conception of eternity, and realized the nothingness of time, helping one to understand the infinite.

The silent majesty of the pyramids also impressed them. Again they seemed to hear, as they stood beneath, the tread of Greek and Roman and Anglo-Saxon, as their armies passed by on marches of conquest; but now all were vanished and gone, while these silent witnesses of this military pomp and glory, hoary with antiquity and regardless of the flight of time, alone remained.

At the end of their stay in Cairo the travelers went by rail to a point not far distant from Suez, where the canal was not then completed, and embarked on the steamship Deccan which was to

convey them to Calcutta. Crossing the Red Sea they stopped at Aden, where they enjoyed a delightful moonlight ride into the city. Next they entered the Indian Ocean and reached Ceylon, where they went on shore for several days. Then they came to Madras, India, but the waves were running so high they did not land. Continuing on their way they arrived at the Sandheads, and took in the pilot who would guide the vessel through the treacherous Hoogly River to Calcutta. At last they landed in this far Eastern city, grateful to the kind Providence that had brought them safely so near their journey's end. Friends received them with warm greetings, and they were taken to the pleasant home of an old and dear acquaintance to remain during their stay. Ere long they started on the last stage of the journey, going by rail to Goalundo, one hundred and fifty miles from Calcutta, on the mighty Brahmaputra, that rolls its resistless flood through the Assam valley to the sea. Here they left traveling on land to go on board the steamer Punjaub, Captain Elder. The means of conveyance to Assam was now in striking contrast to the journey in little native boats, rowing against the strong current and taking months to accomplish, in the days of old. But now the finger of progress had touched India, and English enter-

prise introduced some of the comforts of modern civilization. They went as far as a town called Koliabor on the steamer, and then left the Brahmaputra to proceed to Nowgong, thirty-two miles distant, on the Kullung River. The way thither led through the jungle, and had it not been for the want of bridges the trip might have been made

Girls' Praying Band at Nowgong

in a carriage, as there was a very good road through the jungle. The monster elephant swam the streams while they remained securely fastened upon his back, and found the ride a really pleasant one. It was long after dark before they reached Nowgong, where they received a warm welcome from Mrs. Scott, whose husband had died during the absence of Doctor Bronson, and who had remained in charge of the station till his return.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

AGAIN AT NOWGONG

THUS the overland journey which was begun December 15, 1869, ended safely March 28, 1870. The two had gone in a lonely way where there were to have been three, yet perhaps the angel presence of the wife and mother was with them—an attendant spirit sent forth to minister. The native Christians welcomed them with mingled joy and sorrow, missing her who had been called higher, and glad that their revered guide and teacher would be with them once more, and also his daughter who had come to take her mother's place. Many of the older ones remembered "Maria Baba," and among them her old ayah, or nurse, came tottering in to see her child, for she was now old and infirm. There were many inquiries after "Harriette Baba," who had been the last of the children to leave Nowgong.

With much interest Maria saw the trees her father had planted on the birth of each little daughter and now grown to a goodly size. Everywhere

were memorials of the sainted mother, and the Nowgong girls' school, established by her in 1844, came to Maria as a special legacy from the departed. This school was placed under her charge, and she loved it as the apple of her eye and gave to it devoted and untiring labor. She received a visit from the English government inspector of

Girls' School, Nowgong

schools, who seemed pleased with the way in which she conducted her school. He promised her a "grant in aid" as soon as possible, and kept his word; and the help thus rendered was a great assistance in carrying out her cherished plans. He also sent her a present of forty rupees.

Miss Bronson made rapid progress in acquiring the language, and proved what has been

remarked, that the children of missionaries who have spoken foreign tongues when small show wonderful facility in the mastery of languages when older. Though they may have forgotten the strange tongue, lisped in early childhood, their talent as linguists makes itself evident in maturer years.

Such was her interest in the advancement of her school, that she wrote to friends in America requesting them to send a series of large colored Bible pictures to hang on the walls and help her to instruct the little ones. Also pictures of "Pilgrim's Progress," and some materials for sewing and fancy work. She was most grateful for the help thus sent her.

A letter from Maria to her sister Harriette, written after their arrival at Nowgong, shows the tender solicitude she felt for her father:

"Dear Harriette and William: You see that we are again in dear old Nowgong, the home of our childhood and the scene of our loved mother's labors. Many things make this a sacred place, and I feel it a privilege to be stationed here. Dear Mrs. Scott has done nobly in her work while no other missionary was here, and very few would have stood so faithfully at their post with no helper near. But the Almighty was her helper.

"I watch darling papa with a great deal of anxiety. He is better than we could expect, but I can see that his great sorrow tells upon him. I often hear him weeping and praying that God may help him to be submissive, and then he comes to us so cheerful; but I can see he has had a hard struggle. I try to be all a daughter can to him. Oh, if I can bring one ray of sunshine into his bleeding heart I shall be happy!

"This is a pleasant home, dear ones. Nature has made it beautiful, and dear papa's skilful hands have erected one of the most comfortable bungalows in the station. You would find us nicely settled and with all things in common. I could not do this with every one, but "sister Annie," Mrs. Scott, is good in every sense of the word, and we agree perfectly. She is housekeeper while I am learning the language, and the first of June I am to take my turn. Indian housekeeping is very different from American. We often want to send all the brothers and sisters invitations to dinner or tea, but fearing you will not accept have to be content by inviting our English neighbors. There are quite a number of them, so we are not without some society. I do not feel as if we were in the wilds of India, for it is more civilized than I expected to find it. Sometimes I forget so great a distance separates

us, especially when we are reading the papers from home. Letters and papers are the greatest comfort out here, and without them the separation from our loved ones would be almost intolerable. With warmest love, your sister,

"MARIE."

Thus sped the busy months in toil for the blessed Master until a change came over the Nowgong household. Mrs. Scott removed to Gauhati, and not long after Doctor Bronson was united in marriage to Mrs. F. A. Danforth, the widow of Rev. Appleton Danforth, one of the early missionaries to Assam.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THE TRIP TO SINGAPORE

THE Rev. A. H. Danforth and wife had been stationed at Gauhati while in Assam. On account of failing health he and his family returned to the United States, and after a short season of rest engaged in pastoral labor until his death. Mrs. Danforth remained in America until her children were grown and then returned to India, where in a short time she was married to Doctor Bronson. Her past experience and good knowledge of the language made her of value to the mission, and Doctor Bronson's lonely heart was comforted by the presence of this "helpmeet."

Maria Bronson was much worn by the care of the girls' school, and as Mrs. Bronson was now able to relieve her for a time, she sought a change and rest by going to Gauhati to visit Mrs. Scott. She returned to Nowgong after a stay of nearly four months, much improved in health.

But the shadow of coming change and sorrow began to settle slowly over the household. Soon

after her arrival Mrs. Bronson's health began to fail very gradually but surely, until at last it was feared that consumption was fastening itself upon her. She was advised to try a trip on the great river, but it gave no permanent benefit. Then it was decided that she should go to Calcutta for medical advice and treatment. She was unwilling that her husband should leave his work to go with her, saying, "I came to India to help not to hinder." Maria Bronson was about to go to Calcutta on some pressing business and offered to accompany her. Doctor Bronson remained in Nowgong while his wife and daughter started for Calcutta, but when they reached Goalundo Mrs. Bronson insisted that Maria should finish the journey by rail, to save time, while she would continue traveling on the river, to gain longer benefit from the fresh air and quiet. Maria reached the city quite a little in advance of Mrs. Bronson, who on her arrival went directly to Miss Seelye's sanitarium. Her stepdaughter was shocked at the change in her appearance during this short time, though the invalid herself did not realize that she was worse. But after a consultation of physicians, she was ordered off at once for a sea voyage to Singapore, down the Bay of Bengal. Maria was summoned to accompany her, and though she had but twenty-four hours in

which to arrange for this unexpected change in her plans, at the appointed hour she was ready.

During the first few days at sea the invalid rallied considerably, and became confident that she would be sufficiently restored to health to take up her work once more. They made stops at

A Brahmin Family, Bombay

Rangoon and Moulmein on their way out, and enjoyed delightful meetings with missionary friends. But Mrs. Bronson's improvement was only transient, and her strength failed day by day. It became evident on the return voyage that she could not live to reach Calcutta, and sorrowfully they left the steamer at Rangoon. She was conveyed to the home of Doctor and Mrs. Stev-

ens, and all that lay in the power of human love and kindness was done for the dear one so near the brink of the river. Telegrams were sent to her husband to hasten on, but in spite of tender care and nursing she lingered only a short time.

A letter from Maria Bronson to her adopted mother best tells the story of this sad, anxious time.

"STEAMER HIMMALAYAH, February 11, 1874.

"MY DEAREST MOTHER:

"My last letter to you was mailed from Rangoon, Burma, while I was watching by the sick-bed and uncertain of how long I should be delayed. It is all over now, and the poor sufferer is free from all pain and joining in the praises of the Lamb, while I am wending my lonely way homeward. She passed away February 3, and the funeral service was on the following day, as I was anxious to take the next steamer bound for Calcutta and hasten back to dear papa. I hope to arrive there by next Friday and find him awaiting me.

"Let me tell you some of my experiences the last few days, while accompanying the sick one through 'the valley of the shadow.' Her last Sabbath was a quiet and precious one to us all.

They were singing some sacred music in the parlor, and hearing it she asked them to come in and sing for her, and at her request sang 'Asleep in Jesus, Blessed Sleep,' and several other hymns, after which Mr. Armstrong made a very touching prayer.

"Her nights were distressing, and the ayah and I were both much worn by the constant care and anxiety. Monday evening we felt she was almost home, and at twelve o'clock the last change came over her, yet she lingered till the next day. I sat beside her feeling every breath might be her last until I was overcome by fatigue, and the kind friends urged me to lie down and take a little rest and they would call me if needed. I had not slept long when the ayah came and said she was calling me. I went to her quickly and she whispered, 'My Jesus, my Jesus! My Father says, "Come home." I rest in his arms.' Then she drew me to her and in broken accents whispered also, 'Tell your papa to forgive me, for I did wrong not to let him come with me. I thought I should get well, but I was mistaken. Give him my love and tell him we shall meet in a better world.'

"She lay back exhausted and was unable to say more. She clung to me to the last, holding my hand, but when the struggle for breath had

ceased the expression of pain passed away and she wore a sweet smile in death, for which we were thankful, as her poor frame was so racked with suffering we were afraid it would leave an impress. Papa's dear friend, Mr. Brayton, conducted the funeral service at the house, and Mr. Bennett at the grave. After laying her to rest beside Doctor Wade in the mission cemetery, I had only a short time left to rest before the coming of the steamer for Calcutta, and I saw as much of the dear mission circle in Rangoon as possible in my worn-out condition. I can never forget their kindness and sympathy in this time of sore trial.

"I am enjoying the quiet and rest on this steamer. Am hoping to find dear papa in Calcutta; if not, I must hurry on to Nowgong, for I am most anxious about him."

Thus devoted was this true, loving daughter, and she had the pleasure of seeing her father come on board the steamer as soon as it had anchored at Calcutta. They met with mingled emotions after this long and trying separation, during which interval so much of sorrow had taken place. But, alas! a still darker cloud was soon to overspread the horizon, which it was well they could not discern to sadden the joy of their meeting.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

PASSING THROUGH DEEP WATERS

AFTER a few weeks' rest in Calcutta, spent in the home of their kind friends, Mr. and Mrs. Andrews, Doctor Bronson and daughter began the journey back to Nowgong. Going by rail to Goalundo, and there taking the steamer which made regular trips to Assam, they could now traverse the distance in a few days, which formerly took months to accomplish. The bracing air of the great river seemed to benefit Maria, and her anxious father was glad to see color returning to her pallid cheeks. She looked forward eagerly to their arrival at the beloved Indian home, and was planning especially to do all she could for her father. Alas! her dream of the future was never to be realized on earth; for after three weeks' travel on the river, in the mysterious providence of God, her life, so necessary to others, was suddenly ended, and at the early age of thirty-three she received her crown. So heartrending was this occurrence that it can best be told in the

language of her bereaved father in a letter written to her adopted mother, Mrs. Davis Cotes of Springfield, N. Y. This letter furnishes one of the most wonderful instances of submission to God's will in the depths of heart-breaking sorrow:

"GOALPARA, March 20, 1874.

"MY DEAR SISTER:

"How shall I announce to you the painful intelligence that our darling Maria is no more! I write you first, asking you to inform her sisters. She died of cholera on the night of the eighteenth instant, after the steamer had anchored at this place, the first stop on entering Assam. Yesterday we laid her to rest in the English cemetery here. She had just written you of her trip to Singapore, and of the death and burial of Mrs. Bronson at Rangoon, February 3, the very day I was expecting their arrival at Calcutta!

"It had been a very severe trial that I was not permitted to meet my dear wife once more. At her request I had hastened to Calcutta to be present at the medical consultation on her case, and I felt it might become my duty to accompany her to America that she might die among her own dear children. She had felt unwilling for me to leave the work to go with her on her trip, hence it was

a great satisfaction to me that dear Maria went with her and cared for her to the last.

"After the burial I met my dear girl on board the steamer as it arrived at Calcutta, and was glad to find her looking better than I expected. And now that I was not obliged to return to America, she earnestly desired to return with me to Assam that we might labor on together in our mission work, for which she laid many plans. One great desire seemed to be to relieve me from care as much as lay in her power and make our home a happy one.

"March first we took passage on the steamer Rajmehal for Assam. Each day she seemed to enjoy the rest and the fresh air of the river, also the beautiful scenery through which we were passing. But on the morning of the eighteenth, when she did not rise for breakfast as usual, I knocked at her door and found her quite indisposed. She complained of slight nausea and other symptoms, for which I gave her a little medicine, and we hoped she would soon feel better. About noon she grew worse, and I called a native doctor, who was the only one on board, but medicine proved of no avail. Severe cramps set in, the voice became unnatural, the eyes sunken, the extremities cold, and by these fatal symptoms I knew that our poor Maria had the dread Asiatic

cholera in its most malignant form! The lady passengers were untiring in efforts to relieve her suffering, yet though everything was tried she continued to sink. At length I said to her, 'Maria, dear, you are very ill; we hope you will recover, but should God's will be otherwise, has death any terror for you?' She whispered, 'No.' 'Do you feel that the Saviour is near?' 'Yes.' 'Have you any messages to send to your sisters, to your dear adopted mother whom you love so tenderly, to your native girls in the school, or have you anything to tell me about your business matters?' She gave me an earnest, expressive, loving look, and after a little, replied, 'I cannot talk.' And so I have no messages from our dear, dying child to send you. The force of the attack of cholera was so great as completely to paralyze her. Her love and gratitude to you was unabated, for all you have done for her and her sisters.

"We dropped anchor toward evening at the nearest point accessible, eight miles from this station, Goalpara. The captain kindly despatched a man for the European doctor, and I sent for our missionary associate stationed there, Rev. Mr. Keith. They had to traverse the eight miles distance and could not arrive before midnight, alas, too late! About half an hour after their arrival,

though still conscious, she breathed her last and sweetly slept in Jesus.

"And there in that desolate cabin, by the lifeless remains of my dear child, the last and only earthly comfort left to cheer my now desolate home in this dark heathen land, when my poor unreconciled heart cried out, 'Why, Lord?' I seemed to hear in answer Jesus' own voice, saying, 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' Pray for me that in this hour of deepest sorrow I may see even in this crushing affliction God's hand, 'who doeth all things well.' And that I may be able to say from the heart, 'Not my will, but thine.'

"The steamer could not be detained for the burial, and under the direction of the lady passengers the body was laid out neatly and a coffin made of planks prepared by order of the captain. I had all her things packed up to be sent on to Nowgong, while I myself prepared to leave the steamer. At break of day a boat was manned with lascars, or a part of the native crew of the steamer, and in it was placed the coffin, while I and one of the officers of the ship stepped in, and in another boat a number of the passengers accompanied us the whole distance to the mission premises. Six wild mountain Garos were sent by the English magistrate to dig the grave, and

they were our only pall-bearers. There were but two English residents in the town, who joined the small procession. On account of the sudden illness of Mrs. Keith, Mr. Keith was unable to go to the grave, so the sad duty of the burial service devolved upon me. The cemetery is a beautiful one, all walled around and overlooking the mighty Brahmaputra. It can be seen for a long distance away. I felt to thank God that he had so ordered it, that she had died where she could be buried in a Christian cemetery, instead of in some lonely spot like those through which we had just passed. I hope we may erect a suitable stone to mark this sacred spot.

"I am waiting here for the next steamer to proceed on my way to Nowgong. I return to a desolate home; but when our earthly comforts are taken away it is that we may seek our all in God. Pray earnestly for me.

"Your heart-broken brother,

"Miles Bronson."

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

EARLY CROWNED

HE sacred river's silvery
mist
Is by the morning sunshine
kissed,
But dark the rushing wave below
As one is borne against its flow—
Who wist not yestermorn 'twould be
Her daybreak of eternity.

"Closed are those eyes of liquid light
In silent, unawakening night;
Not e'en a father's anguish now
Can call back life to lips or brow;
Nor the high work her spirit chose
Awake her from this long repose.

"Her work is done, on distant shore,
Dear dying eyes seek hers no more;
From home, from kindred far, she kept
Love's vigil till her sufferer slept;
In its last clasp the cold hand pressed,
Then laid the sainted to her rest.

" Her own, how near! Death's shadowy
wing,
O'er watched and watcher hovering;
While in that soft and hallowed light
Her soul grew ready for its flight;
Stayed but to cheer her father's heart,
Then heard the summons, ' Child,
depart! '

" Now to its grave that dust so dear
Is borne by savage mountaineer,
With trembling voice the man of God
Commits her to her native sod;
Then doubly stricken, bows his head,
Alone with sorrow and his dead.

" Nay, not alone, God's angels keep
Their watch o'er those who wake and
sleep;
E'en death, through his providing care,
Will plant the seed whose fruitage fair,
Of ransomed souls in years to come,
Shall swell the reaper's ' harvest home.'

" Yet land bereaved, beloved, for thee,
Thy children's tears fall silently;
The sickle dropped, the grain unbound,
Stands whitening all the fertile ground;
While scattered laborers, strong in faith,
Toil on in suffering until death.

"Oh, shall the anguish and the tears,
The martyr lives of other years,
Whose agony of soul was given
To lift thy sons from earth to heaven,
Bring forth their future fruit in naught
But tender memory, reverent thought?

"No! the dear ashes scattered wide
By Orient and by western tide,
Cry, 'Speed the torch from hand to hand
Till hut and fane illumined stand;
And warrior, priest, and devotee
In one glad worship bend the knee.'

"And let the sound of Sabbath bell
O'er all thy mountain barriers swell,
Till eastward meets the westward wave,
And in far isle and desert cave
That faith be held, that Name be sung
Which knows no bounds of clime or tongue."

These beautiful lines were written by Miss E. W. Brown, the daughter of Rev. Nathan Brown, missionary to Assam, in the early days of the mission, on learning of the death of Maria Bronson so soon after the burial of Mrs. Bronson at Rangoon, and the pathos of this poem will be appreciated by all who may chance to read it. Miss Bronson's sudden and unexpected removal from

earthly scenes and labors was a shock to many and a stunning blow to her doubly bereaved father, thus left all alone. And yet this servant of God never murmured nor wished to leave his work. Although his anxious children in America besought him to return, he remained on the field, leaning on God for strength; and thus sustained he endured the lonely months that followed.

There had been a rumor that Maria Bronson had been taken away by cholera, but it was not believed until Doctor Bronson's letter announcing the sad fact reached her foster-mother, Mrs. Cotes, at Springfield, N. Y. Then there was mourning on both sides of the ocean; for she was beloved by a large circle of friends, and had been the first to fall in the ranks of the young women missionaries sent out by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the West. She was also the first one appointed to do special work in the zenanas of Assam.

A letter from Rev. Mr. Neighbor, at that time Doctor Bronson's associate in Nowgong, shows how severely her loss was felt by the mission and how great was the sympathy for her poor stricken father:

"Dear Brother and Sister Tolman: You have ere this learned of the sudden death of your

sister Maria, and under what painful circumstances. The sad tidings came upon us like a thunderbolt, and deep gloom has settled upon the mission through this dark and inscrutable providence. We are awaiting the arrival of her father on the next steamer, and shall do all in our power to alleviate his overwhelming sorrow. Our poor brother's sorrowful task on his return will be to open his closed bungalow and go over the effects of his wife and daughter for their final disposal. Our hearts will ache for him during this heart-breaking duty, and the reason for such sore bereavement seems truly inexplicable. Maria seemed so necessary to him, and had so many noble traits of character we were greatly attached to her. I doubt not but she would have recovered from her attack on the steamer had she not been so much reduced in strength by her care of Mrs. Bronson. But she has truly fallen at the post of duty, than which nothing is more honorable. Her memory will always be a cherished one to my wife and to me. The grief of the native girls in her school is most touching. With deep sympathy, your brother,

"R. E. Neighbor."

CHAPTER THIRTY

THE NEW HOME AT GAUHATI

But the stately ships move on
To their haven under the hill,
But oh, for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

THUS she, who had fallen asleep and had been so early crowned, could not be soon forgotten in her beloved Assam. To the sorrowful father long and lonely were the months that followed, and yet he had no desire to leave his work and return to his children and friends in America, although strongly urged to do so. Much anxiety was felt for him, lest the double bereavement might be beyond his strength to endure.

But as the Hebrew children of old walked in the fiery furnace unharmed, because the form of a fourth was with them, so in this furnace of affliction the lonely husband and father was sustained and supported by the presence of his Lord. He found verified to him the promise, "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you." No

murmur escaped his lips, but patiently he labored on in the work of the mission. He did not now try to live in his desolate bungalow, but stayed with his missionary associates across the way, Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Neighbor, who were unfailing in their kindness and sympathy.

And now came a change of location which resulted in his removal to Gauhati, thus severing the long-cherished associations of years at dear old Nowgong. There, all but three of his children had been born; there, lingered memories of the sweet wife of his youth, and those early pioneer years; there, later, the devoted daughter, Maria, had lavished on him her love and care, and gazing sorrowfully at the "children's tree," which still stood beside the bungalow, he felt that no other spot could seem so much like home.

Doctor Bronson was married to Miss Mary Rankin, one of the missionaries of the Woman's Society of the West, and set up a new home in Gauhati. She had been an intimate friend of Maria Bronson, and was often with her in the family circle. Again the heart of the lonely man was comforted by having some one to love and care for him. He regained a good measure of his wonted health and strength, and was able to perform the many duties devolving upon him at this important station.

Like the third wife of Doctor Judson, Mrs. Mary Bronson was much younger than her husband; still she made him a most devoted wife, and cared for him so tenderly in his declining years that his children felt they owed a debt of grati-

A Bungalow at Gauhati

tude to this noble woman. The prattle of a child once more enlivened the house, and the son given him in his old age he dedicated to God in his infancy, and hoped he would become a foreign missionary and continue his father's labors in Assam. To this child was given the honored name of Miles Bronson. Twin daughters also

came to gladden the hearts of their fond parents —little Ruth and Laura. Doctor Bronson felt indeed grateful, that after so much of sorrow there had come into his life again so much of happiness in the new home at Gauhati, and that his health was sufficiently restored to enable him to perform more labor. For all these reasons he could raise a glad "Ebenezer."

And now with returning strength it became his privilege again to make a tour through the Garo hills. In a pocket diary, written by his own hand, are related incidents of this trip which are of great interest:

"March 2, 1875.

"On this day I left Gauhati and my little family to visit the Garo villages and schools, taking with me as assistants Kandura and Apinta. Captain Campbell had placed an elephant at my disposal, and another friend furnished a tent and pony, so I started well equipped. We crossed over the river to the north, the sun very hot, but the scenery most beautiful. Reached Kohora at 5 p. m., and rested that night at the government bungalow. I then went on to Komulpur and Rungiah, where I found good schools and many in attendance. I gave some books to the children. At the next village crowds assembled to listen

and showed no disposition to argue. Late at night a large number came to hear more of the truth, and I preached unto them Jesus. I then reached a place called Nollari, where there is an old resthouse, where I received the people who came. As I had feverish symptoms from traveling in yesterday's heat, I sent out Kandura and Apinta to meet and talk with those outside.

"The first Sabbath of my tour I spent at a place called Bojali Gam, where Garo Christians met us and helped carry in our luggage, and everything was made comfortable, but I had fever again and could not attend religious services. The native assistants took charge, and that evening the little church received nineteen persons for baptism. On Monday morning it became a question of duty, whether to go forward or return home on account of threatened illness. I asked God to help me, and decided to stay and try to baptize these newly received candidates.

"The baptism took place at nine the next morning, and at 5 p. m. was communion with sixty-four church-members present. I had been strengthened for the duties of the day, since I had cast myself on God for strength. As there was a constant stream of visitors there was no chance to rest, and when I preached at noon I was very hot and weary. But the joy of the new

converts cheered me and I preached again at night. Going onward to another village, I found fifteen awaiting baptism, who received the sacred rite in a beautiful crystal stream surrounded by hills. They too seemed unusually happy.

"The next Sabbath a severe storm set in with rain and thunder, and proved so tempestuous I feared but few would come to services. But at noon people came from all quarters and the house was full, with many standing outside. Nearly all were Christians or the children of Christians. I preached from the Saviour's last command, 'Go ye,' and new arrivals kept constantly coming, till at last I asked Kandura to go out and address them. It is most interesting to see how the work of grace is spreading through these Garo hills, and what a contrast to the time when I first visited them. Then not a ray of gospel light pierced the dense darkness, but now the name of Jesus has been proclaimed until the once gloomy hills are basking in the rays of the glorious Sun of Righteousness. Very many of the people live no longer in fear of evil spirits, but look alone to Christ for salvation. I praise God for what I have seen of the progress of his kingdom while on this trip through the mountains."

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

THE CALL TO DIBRUGARH AND THE TEA GARDENS

AFTER five years a change came over the new home at Gauhati. Doctor Bronson had become attached to his new surroundings, and the devotion of his wife and the presence of little Miles, the only son among so many daughters, also that of his sisters, little Ruth and Laura, was a constant source of happiness. The work at Gauhati was encouraging, and prospects bright; but there came an earnest call to another and important field of labor, and he sought prayerfully to ascertain what was duty. The English commissioner had long desired that a mission should be begun among the coolies in the tea gardens of Upper Assam. He extended an invitation to Doctor Bronson to take charge of this new enterprise, with headquarters at a place called Dibrugarh. He was selected from among the missionaries on the ground for his wide experience and knowledge of pioneer work. The urgent request appealed to his heart strongly, but before

taking such a step he had to consult the missionary society at home, and when the case was laid before it, the Executive Committee of the Missionary Union said "Go."

So this devoted laborer decided to make the change and move to Dibrugarh, a long distance up the Brahmaputra. The province of Assam has become famous on account of the growth and cultivation of the tea plant, which even grows wild in the mountainous regions. It is claimed to be the native home of the tea plant, and that a Buddhist priest discovered and carried it into China and Japan. The tea raised in Assam is of superior quality and is seldom seen in this country, as the English endeavor to monopolize the entire product, and hence the name given to English breakfast tea which is used exclusively by English royalty.

The tea plant is raised from seed, and when two or three years old it begins to bear, and lives for ten or twelve years. The plants are trimmed so as to present a broad surface on top, and the first gathering of the young leaves is in April. This makes the finest tea. The leaves are picked every month and then rolled and exposed to a great heat in a furnace. It is interesting to visit a tea house in one of the gardens. The tea leaf when picked is spread out to wilt, and then put

into big bags which are turned round and round in a wheel-like arrangement for rolling the leaves. Two bags are put in at a time, and as the machinery moves these bags move around in opposite directions. After being properly rolled they are again spread out to dry, and exposed to the air to oxidize, slightly ferment, and turn a rusty color. Next it is placed upon sieves and put over the fire of the furnace for the final process. It is now ready to sift and pack for market, while still warm, in boxes lined with tin foil. The only difference between green and black tea is in the mode of preparation.

The tea plants in bloom present an attractive appearance, as the tea blossom is a pretty flower with a large yellow center of short stamens, and four delicate white petals about the size of an apple blossom and sweetly scented.

As the Assamese people are indolent and unreliable, the tea planters import laborers from Bengal to do the work in the gardens, and bring them thither at considerable expense. There are many large tea estates or plantations scattered over Northern Assam, such as Hati-Poti tea garden and Deo-Pani garden, belonging to the Assam Tea Company. A spacious tea estate is also owned by a Colonel Buckingham at Amguri, at the base of the Naga hills. It contains thou-

sands of acres, and gives employment to thirty thousand laborers. To such a field as this was Doctor Bronson urged to go and commence the pioneer work. His whole soul was in the undertaking, for he saw the great opportunity opening among a people who were exiles from their native land, coming from different provinces, and bringing their earthly all in a bundle. They were frequently homesick, and could be more easily approached by any one showing sympathy on that account, and would listen to the gospel message.

In October, 1879, he removed to Dibrugarh, leaving the faithful Kandura, native preacher there, in charge at Gauhati. He rented a house and began to work in both the tea gardens and the town. Everything looked hopeful, but before he had been long on the ground his health gave way and he was compelled reluctantly to leave for home. Had he been permitted to stay, doubtless, he would have had the privilege of witnessing the harvest later laborers have had the joy of gathering; for there has been a flourishing work both in the gardens themselves and in the villages adjacent. The people who live in them have left the gardens for good, as their term of agreement had expired. They settle in these villages and raise rice, cattle, buffaloes, chickens, pigs, and often become well off. They are harder

to reach than the coolies in the gardens on account of their indifference. The native preachers that are sent out to work among them come back, saying, "It is hard, very hard. Doing the Lord's work in such a place is harder than hoeing tea."

But there has been success among these village churches. The oldest village church supports its own pastor and conducts its own meetings. Every member of the church attends the prayer meeting, a good example to churches in Christian lands! They make known the way of salvation to the heathen about them, and are indeed a light shining in a dark place. So faithful labor has not been in vain.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

THE LAST HOME-COMING

ALTHOUGH Doctor Bronson felt great disappointment in not being able to continue the new work he had undertaken, he took comfort from the thought that, though the workers may be removed or fall at their posts, the work itself goes on. Under the overruling providence of God this has again and again proved sadly yet gloriously true.

Soon after his arrival at Dibrugarh, and after arrangements had been made to carry on his work, a hindrance all unforeseen occurred. One day while dismounting too hastily from his elephant he received what proved to be a serious injury. Ever thoughtful of others, he sprang from the back of the elephant to help in preventing an accident about to occur on the street along which he was riding. He was compelled to seek medical assistance, and at length was advised to hasten to America if he hoped for recovery from the distressing ailment which resulted.

They now made preparations to leave this new field of labor sorrowfully, and yet without a murmur at what seemed a mysterious providence. For this servant of God had already passed through trials hard to understand, but One had ever been near to "sanctify to him his deepest distress," and he felt that he could trust his Lord unto the end. And now bidding farewell to Assam for, as he hoped, only a brief season, he started with his little family on their long journey. They had a pleasant, uneventful voyage, and arrived at New York safely and with improved health. Going on to Chicago, they rested awhile at the home of their beloved eldest daughter, Mrs. Mary Tolman. They then went to Detroit, Mich., to visit Mrs. Bronson's mother, Mrs. Laura Rankin. They finally decided to locate at Eaton Rapids, Mich., as the husband of the youngest daughter, Sophia, was pastor of the Baptist church at that place. They rented a desirable house near their daughter and soon were pleasantly situated.

Doctor Bronson now went to Fort Madison, Iowa, to visit his daughter Harriette, wife of Rev. William C. Gunn, the chaplain of the State penitentiary there. This was a most memorable visit, and proved to be the last time the venerated father came to see these dear children and grandchil-

dren. One delightful occurrence was meeting again his beloved former associate at Nowgong, the Rev. I. J. Stoddard, who was then residing quite near, at Pella, Iowa. He was sent for and came at once, overjoyed to meet again in the flesh the companion of so many labors in far-off Assam. It was affecting to witness the meeting between these old veterans as they embraced each other, with tears rolling down their cheeks, and to hear them exclaim, "My brother! oh, my brother!"

After the return of Doctor Bronson from these visits to his children, some discomfort was experienced in being obliged to move from the house where they were living on account of its having been sold. His elder daughters decided to make an effort to purchase him a home, which was accomplished, and presented to him and his wife free from all incumbrance. To help do this the noble foster-mother of the three daughters, Maria, Eliza, and Harriette, gave the last three hundred dollars of the purchase price. All hoped also to have a home of his own would make the loved father more content to remain in his native land, as he still expressed a strong desire to return to Assam.

They were now comfortably settled at Eaton Rapids, and health and strength seemed in a

measure returning. Both Doctor Bronson and wife attended as many of the Associations and State Conventions as possible, and made earnest appeals for Assam, to which he often expressed his desire to return. He was present at the anniversary meetings in 1880, which were held at Saratoga, N. Y. The church at Eaton Rapids had most generously defrayed the expenses of himself and his wife thither, an act of kindness that greatly cheered his heart. He was most happy to have the privilege of attending, and an incident occurred toward the close which was profoundly affecting, and drew tears to many eyes.

An appeal had been made for reenforcements for the foreign field, an appeal which told of the scarcity of laborers, and concluding with a call for volunteers. Hundreds of young men and women were in that audience, and many able-bodied pastors of churches, yet not a single recruit for the service arose, although the call was repeated again and again. There was an embarrassing silence, when suddenly a venerable white-haired man sprang to his feet, exclaiming, "I am ready; send me, brethren! I am good for ten years more! Do let me go!" A holy enthusiasm shone on his countenance, for forty-four years of toil and hardship under a tropical sun

had not satisfied this veteran of the cross, and the missionary fire still burned with unquenchable ardor on the altar of his heart.

As Doctor Bronson resumed his seat the younger men in that assembly felt rebuked and ashamed at their reluctance to obey the Great Commission. It was a lesson in devotion to the cause of missions that was never forgotten by those present.

But because of Doctor Bronson's evidently failing health the Executive Committee of the Missionary Union did not accept his touching offer to return and toil a few years longer. Disappointed, he returned to his home at Eaton Rapids, and yet a loving voice seemed to whisper to his heart from above:

"Lo, for thee the glory waiteth;
Lo, for thee a starry crown;
Worn and weary in the service,
Thou mayest lay thy burdens down."

So he strove to be submissive to his Father's will, and be content to refrain from the labor he fain would still have continued.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

ALONG THE SUNSET ROAD

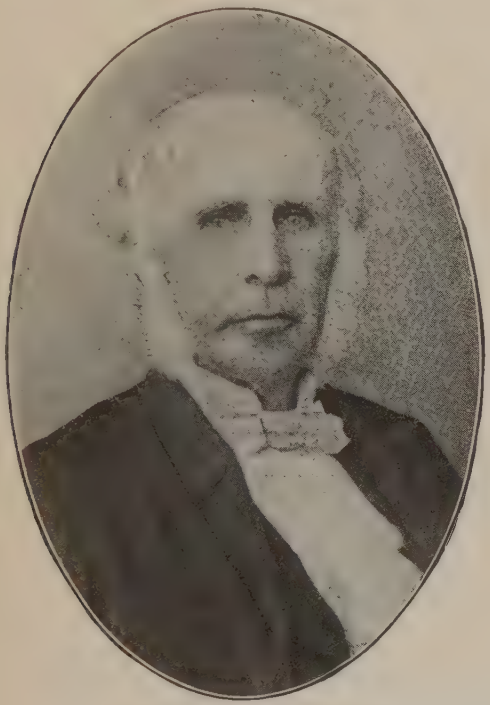
Growing older? nay, 'tis younger,
As our steps we gently turn
Down the slope, where golden splendors
From life's sunset glories burn.

AFTER the return of Doctor Bronson from the anniversaries he drooped perceptibly, and it seemed as if the incentive to life had gone with the withdrawal of all hope that he could return to his loved field of labor.

He strove hard to be reconciled, and to try to live for the sake of his loved ones; but his strength failed from day to day, and it became evident that the sands of life would soon be run. But although the "earthly house of this tabernacle was to be dissolved," he had a place prepared above in the house of many mansions, where "His servants shall serve him."

Very gradual and beautiful was his life's decline. Infinite love watched over him, and to the aged pilgrim the pathway no longer led uphill

and down, as in the earlier stages of the journey, but sloped gently to the westward, where a soft glory filled the atmosphere, reflected from an un-



Doctor Bronson at Sunset

seen source. The steep mountains and deep valleys were all passed, and the balance of the way was made smooth for the faltering footsteps.

Sweet songs of love and praise often floated from his lips while thus waiting for the shadows to be a "little longer grown," such as "Days and Moments Quickly Flying" and "Jesus, I Love Thy Charming Name."

And still the glory ever brightened, as day by day he drew nearer a darkly rolling river which is called Death. The rushing of its waters could now be plainly heard, but he knew no fear; for the One was with him, and his rod and "his staff —they comforted him."

There seemed no special disease, but a slow wasting away of the life-forces. There was one touching feature of his illness that revealed itself to those present—where his thoughts were continually in moments of delirium, he was always back in Assam, speaking the language and giving directions for the mission work.

At one time he seemed preparing to make a tour among the heathen villages and selecting the necessary luggage to be carried on the mission elephant. He frequently would conduct family worship in Assamese, and follow with careful instructions to the native preachers and assistants.

When his pastor once came in to see him, he greeted him with the unfailing courtesy so characteristic of him, saying, "How good of you to leave your work in America and cross the ocean

to see me." Perhaps, as his soul was so engrossed with his former toil beyond the sea, he might have lived longer could he have returned and taken it up again. Hence, it seemed a pity that his heart's desire was not gratified. At the time of his last return to Assam he had thus written:

"I bless the Lord every day for permitting me to come back to my field of labor here. I look around and see ignorance, darkness, and superstition on every hand, and pray that more laborers be sent that the "word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, all through this beautiful valley of the Brahmaputra."

But the most pathetic incident of all occurred just before he passed away. Napoleon, on his deathbed, showed his ruling passion still to be strong in death, for the last words he uttered were, "Head of the army!" But the dying words of this veteran of the cross were of bloodless victories and trophies, won from kingdoms of darkness where Satan had had full sway.

He was now so near the gates of the celestial city that he seemed bathed in its soft radiance, and the peace of heaven was on his brow. Age and weariness seemed slipping from him as he approached the land of immortal youth. Only the river of death lay between him and glory.

The room seemed filled with angelic messengers who had been sent to convoy him within the gates, where loved ones gone before were crowding to greet his entrance, together with many he had brought out of nature's darkness into "God's marvelous light." And now took place the scene which the loving watchers beside him felt was almost too sacred for description and too beautiful for tears. For, before leaving this earthly tabernacle he lingered a few moments to perform a task of love yet undone, and in spirit he again crossed the narrow bounds of space and was in the familiar chapel at Nowgong, holding a farewell service with the little flock of native disciples, of whom he had so long been guide and leader. He exhorted them to be steadfast in the faith, and endeavor to bring as many as possible around them to believe in the only true religion. He then extended his hands as if in benediction, and in a short but earnest prayer commended them to the care and keeping of a gracious God. This was his last utterance and act on earth. He fell back exhausted on the pillows, but the rapture on his countenance grew brighter, and soon the shining ones bore him over the river into the presence of the King, where sweeter than the music of the angels sounded the welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy."

Thus was the "ruling passion" of this saintly missionary also strong in death!

The funeral services were largely attended, and a comforting discourse was preached by Doctor Stimson, one of the district secretaries of the Missionary Union; then they laid him to rest in the cemetery at Eaton Rapids, far away from the scene of his labors.

A memorial tablet of white marble was placed in the church by friends and citizens of Eaton Rapids, which bears the inscription:

In Memory of
REV. MILES BRONSON, D. D.,
Veteran Missionary to Assam, India,
Where he labored from 1836 to 1880. Entered into rest, November 9, 1883.
"The morning cometh."

His children also erected a monument over his grave, on which are inscribed the words:

In Memoriam
REV. MILES BRONSON, D. D.,
Born July 20, 1812. Died November 9, 1883.
For Forty-four Years a Missionary to Assam, India.
Erected by his loving children.

And thus this heroic soul, who "counted all things but loss for Christ," passed away, star-crowned, to his reward; but never can his memory or devoted labors of love be forgotten in Assam, the dark land he strove to enlighten.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

A BRAVE STRUGGLE

MANY tributes were paid to the worth and devotion of this eminent servant of God. His missionary zeal and consecration, the Christly service he performed, the rare loveliness of his character, compared by some to that of the Apostle John, all these were commented on and held up for example. Deep was the mourning on the other side of the ocean for the "Boora Sahib," as he was called in Assam, to distinguish him from the younger missionaries.

In a letter to his daughter Harriette, Mr. Neighbor, at one time his associate at Nowgong, wrote as follows:

"Your honored father did the pioneer work in the Brahmaputra valley through its whole extent, from Sadiya to Goalpara, among both the Assamese proper and the various hill tribes. But when I went to Assam his pioneer days were over and his physical powers were waning. Neverthe-

less, he was enjoying a considerable degree of vigor, and his native tenacity of purpose was unimpaired. His Assamese dictionary and hymn book, which, with Dr. Nathan Brown, he compiled, will remain as his monument, and prolong his influence among the churches of the province for many years to come. He gave his long life to Assam, and well deserves to be counted among the best of our missionary pioneers.

"Yours most truly,

"R. E. NEIGHBOR."

Mrs. Mary Bronson, thus left alone with her three little children, took up bravely the burdens of life, missing sorely the sainted husband for whom she had cared so tenderly. She had to live now for her fatherless ones, and bent every energy to the task. She received a small monthly pension from the Missionary Union, and added to this the rent from a portion of her house. With her good management she made ends meet out of this small income, until expenses increased with the growth of the children. To help in this problem of support, her son Miles left school to her great regret, for she had desired him to have a college education and perhaps later take up his father's lifework in dear old Assam. Mrs. Bronson had a brother in Detroit, engaged in the rail-

road business, and he gave Miles a position in his office and the necessary instruction. It was a great opportunity for the young boy, and he improved it diligently. His mother rented the whole of the house and removed to Detroit with her two little girls, to make a home for her son. They remained in Detroit for some time, until Miles was promoted to a position in Cleveland, Ohio, and they removed thither. They united with the Euclid Avenue Baptist Church, and soon afterward Mrs. Bronson was appointed church missionary, which position she retained with great acceptance, until failing health compelled her to resign a position in which she had been most useful and beloved.

Miles was again transferred to a still higher position as superintendent of a branch of the New York Central Railroad, and about that time was married to a young lady of Aurora, Ill., and went to reside at Yonkers, N. Y., his mother and sisters remaining at Cleveland. Mrs. Bronson had hoped to return to the foreign field after her children no longer needed her care, but alas! this was not to be. A lingering illness set in which proved to be a cancer, and after nine months of patient suffering ended her heroic life. Her son took her and the girls to his home in Yonkers, and spared no expense in ministering to her needs.

The tender love and care lavished upon her by her grateful children and friends were a source of unspeakable comfort amid the weary hours of intense suffering.

When at last it was all over, and she lay sweetly at rest, they took their beloved mother back to their former home at Eaton Rapids, and laid her beside the husband to whose declining years she had been so great a solace and support. There was no truer soul than Mary Rankin Bronson, and she was worthy of the commendation bestowed upon her, both for the work accomplished during her term of missionary service, and for her rare and unexcelled devotion as a wife and a mother.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

MORE SUNDERED LINKS

THE day grows lonelier, the air
Is chillier than it used to be;
We hear about us everywhere
The haunting chords of memory.

"The day grows lonelier; the air
Hath breezes strangely keen and cold;
But woven in—oh, glad! oh, rare!—
What love notes from the hills of gold!

"Dear, crowding faces gathered there,
Dear, blessed tasks that wait our hand;
The day grows lonelier apace,
But heaven shall be our trysting-place."

Six beloved ones connected with this family history had now passed over the river, and the call to follow came again and again to those who remained. The dear adopted mother was still living in the old home at Springfield, N. Y., and now to her came the summons to cross over Jordan. She had done a noble part in the care

and education of three of the daughters, and more than any other had lifted the burden of anxiety from the shoulders of these dear missionary parents and enabled them to continue their labors in Assam. For they knew how faithfully she would fulfil the charge entrusted to her care.

She was feeble and lonely now—the dear children gone and all who had formed her family circle; but still she did good in every way possible. The call came suddenly one morning, and she joined the loved ones on the other shore. The old homestead at Springfield passed into the hands of strangers, endeared by many fond associations and memories of past scenes. This home had sheltered the little daughters till they grew to womanhood and went forth to their lifework; its broad veranda had been the scenes of many meetings and partings, when the loved parents were either returning from India or taking tearfully their leave of the precious ones whom they would not see again perhaps for years. Thus it had been the witness of many a glad greeting and many a lingering farewell. And she had been the center of this household band, diffusing happiness and blessing on all around, and sorely was she missed when the old home contained her presence no longer. Earth was poorer for the departure of this rare soul; for, entrusted with wealth, she

thought not of self but how it could be used for the good of others and the promotion of Christ's kingdom. Her memory will long be cherished in grateful hearts.

And now to the home of the eldest daughter came the call, summoning her away from husband and children to the increasing throng above. Hers had been a life consecrated to the service of Christ both at home and abroad. Baptized by her father at the early age of eight, with some of the first converts in Assam, she ever continued faithful to her Lord, and became herself a missionary as, after her marriage to Rev. Cyrus F. Tolman, together they sailed for Assam. She taught him the language on the way, and many a hard hour's work was accomplished in trying to master the difficulties of this somewhat intricate tongue. They resided in the old mission bungalow Doctor Bronson had lived in, and did successful work among the Assamese and the hill tribes, especially among the tribe called Mikirs, until, as already related, constant attacks of the jungle fever drove Mr. Tolman back to America.

In the home they established in Chicago, missionaries were ever welcome; and many, going to their fields of labor or returning, were here entertained. Doctor Tolman made this his headquarters during the long term of service that

Chapel and Bell Tower, Nowgong

he rendered the Missionary Union as district secretary for the surrounding States. Although unable to remain on the foreign field, the value of his labors in the cause of missions at home was beyond estimate, and his name is remembered as a household word among many of the churches he visited.

Mrs. Mary Tolman was one of the founders of the Woman's Baptist Foreign Missionary Society of the West and its first corresponding secretary. Her earnest efforts along such lines were a witness to the missionary zeal inherited from noble parentage.

To the home of the fourth daughter, Harriette, came also the call, this time to the beloved husband, with whom she had labored in work for the blessed Master. The cherished purpose of her heart had been to become a missionary, for the memory of those consecrated Christian parents was a constant inspiration. Through her course of study she kept this in view, and ever and anon a call came to her ear over the tossing billows, "Come over and help us."

But God had other work for her, and the plan of her life was to be very different. Soon after completing her college course she met the one destined to be her life-companion, and became a pastor's wife at home. But before long a call

came to the young minister and his wife, this time not from over the waters but from behind prison-bars, and the pitiful cry, "There are so few who care for us, or come to point the way to Christ and pardon."

The call could not go unheeded, and so the young pastor and his wife, the way opening signally, began to work in this part of the world's great harvest field. It was their high privilege to give many a "cup of cold water in His Name" to thirsting souls, and during nearly twenty-two years spent in such service it became their life-work. It was the joy of their hearts to render this helpful, Christlike ministry to fallen humanity, and strive to restore the outcast ones to paths of righteousness and peace. The missionary's daughter felt that she had found the work God wanted her to do, in a prison instead of a field in a foreign land, and accepted it gladly and was happy in it, whether leading the service of song in the chapel or teaching in the Sabbath-school, or conversing personally with those anxious to find the better way.

But, alas! there came a day when life's pathway grew suddenly dark, as the loved companion and sharer in this work for the Master was taken from her side. For a time she was withdrawn from the service and associations so dear to her

heart, but their memory was cherished during the lonely months that followed, when the Sabbaths, once so full of this rescue work, seemed empty without the familiar occupation. Then lo, again came the call from behind prison-bars heard years before, "Come over and help us, for workers are so few," and she prayed, "Lord, open thou the door"; for ah, who can afford to be idle, sitting with folded hands when this lost world is to be won for Christ, and the call for workers resounds on every hand. Is it not far better to sacrifice selfish ease and pleasure, and follow in the train of our great Leader until the night comes when no man can work?

In answer to her prayer the way was opened for this missionary's daughter to return to the prison work, and she is thankful for the privilege to be permitted to strive to gather a few more sheaves for the Master before life's pulses fail. And when the deepening splendor in the sunset sky shall reveal the opening gates, where loved ones are waiting to welcome those dear to them below, how sweet to hear the Saviour say of each faithful toiler in his service, "She has done what she could." Then when the broken links of earth are reunited, never more to be severed, the losses of this life will be richly compensated by the rapture and joy above!

Of the children of Doctor and Mrs. Ruth Bronson who still remain there are, besides Harriette, the fourth daughter, Lizzie, the third daughter, wife of Rev. Albert Robinson, at one time associate editor of "The Gospel in All Lands," and also a successful pastor; and Sophia, the youngest daughter, who is the wife of Rev. John M. Titterington. He too has served most acceptably many churches in the Middle West, and she, as a writer of books and editorials, is well known. Thus all these daughters have either been the wives of ministers or have become missionaries themselves.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

WAS IT WORTH WHILE?

Knowest thou the leader of that train,
who toil
The everlasting gospel's light to shed
On earth's benighted shores?
Canst tell the name of the first teacher
In whose steps went forth
O'er sultry India, and the sea-girt isles,
That self-denying band, who counted not
Their lives dear unto them, so they might
Fulfil their ministry, and save the heathen
soul?

THE question has sometimes been asked whether the privations and sacrifices that fall to the lot of a missionary in foreign lands are necessary and required? The answer to this inquiry was given long ago, when the Son of God came down to earth to give his life "a ransom for many." In the light of that supreme sacrifice on Calvary it can be replied reverently, "It is worth while." And the utmost his followers can do in following his example of self-denial and suffering seems but small in comparison. But the way of the

cross has been glorified to those who have heard the call to service and followed in his train.

For they looked not at the seeming earthly loss, but were glad to be able to aid in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. And with the eye of faith, they saw above that "exceeding and eternal weight of glory" which these afflictions, that were but for a moment, should work out for

What Sunday-school Giving Does

them. No effort made "in his name" was in vain; every teardrop, every heartache, every pang of agony at parting with those dearer than life itself; the heart-hunger and loneliness of long years of willing exile from friends and native land; the suffering from deadly diseases; the want of ordinary comforts; even the scattered graves of those who had fallen victims to count-

less dangers, all were noted by Him who marks the sparrow's fall and laid up in his book of remembrance. By wondrous heavenly alchemy these trials would be transmuted into that "crown of glory that fadeth not away," reserved in heaven for them.

We can only estimate the worth of the human soul as we view our Lord dying on Calvary, and realize how God loved the world. During the unutterable anguish of those hours on the cross his soul was sustained by the truth of the utterance made during his brief ministry, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Perhaps a vision rose before him of its fulfilment, and he beheld Satan and the hosts of darkness defeated; the banner of the cross triumphant; and a lost world rescued and saved through his atoning blood, and looking above saw "that great multitude, which no man can number, redeemed to God out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." He thought not of the agony caused by his pierced hands and feet, nor of the thorn-prints on his brow; he heard not the taunts of the jeering crowd around him, nor saw the darkening skies and rending earth; but looking forward to the end of time he saw "the travail of his soul and was satisfied."

And all heroes of the cross since that day have

been nerved to effort and sacrifice by the same glorious outlook and promise. They saw not the dreary present, but a future radiant with gospel light and knowledge. And taking heart they toiled on "obedient to the vision." To hasten

The Banyan Tree and Heathen Temple

this grand consummation they were ready to be sacrificed, or to serve, according to the motto of the Missionary Union, "Ready for either."

When Carey made a map of the world and hung it on the walls of his humble shop to look at while at work, he was appalled to see so vast a portion of the human race with no knowledge of

the gospel. Were he alive to-day he would say of many a land, "Behold, the morning cometh." The dark sin-mountains are aglow with the golden rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and ere long valley and peak shall be ablaze with glory, and the glad cry arise, "Hallelujah! for the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ."

And Assam, that mission field so beloved by heroic dead, shall take her place among the ransomed nations, and this fair province of India become one of the brightest gems in the galaxy of lands rescued from the darkness of heathenism. In the words of the hymn written for the Jubilee Conference held at Nowgong, December 20, 1886, after fifty years of mission work, let us say:

"Wake now the trumpet sound;
Let all Assam resound,
And all her tribes be found
Turning to Him.

"Sea-traveled prayers we hear;
They echo 'persevere,'
Glad Jubilee!
Saved by the great 'I Am,'
Through 'blood of Calvary's' Lamb,
Sin-free—a new Assam
By faith we see!"

For the glory of the Lord has risen upon her, illuminating the mountain barriers which for ages walled in ignorance and superstition; and now her people know the Lord—from the "least unto the greatest."

THE END